



*Sutheo Chamberlain*

# CROSSROADS

*being the works of*

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

1938-1940

Compiled by  
Netaji Research Bureau  
Calcutta



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## Preface

With such a phenomenon in history, where does one begin and where does one end?

This has been the question before the Netaji Research Bureau since it initiated a compilation of the works of Subhas Chandra Bose a little over three years ago. The task is obviously difficult and will inevitably take some years to complete. Nevertheless, a beginning has to be made in the way of publishing, in a more or less organised fashion, some of the important material we have already collected. A growing and renewed interest in Netaji's work and ideas, both in India and abroad, makes this all the more important and urgent.

The years 1938-1940 covered by this anthology represent the peak period in Netaji's political career in India. By the time he was called to the Presidential chair of the Indian National Congress—at the age of fortyone—he had admittedly attained full political maturity, and was ready with his complete political ideology, programme and plan of action. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore: "I have watched the dawn that witnessed the beginning of your political '*Sadhana*'. In that uncertain twilight there had been misgivings in my heart and I had hesitated to accept you for what you are now. . . . Today you are revealed in the pure light of midday sun which does not admit of apprehensions. You have come to absorb varied experience during these years. Today you bring your matured mind and irrepressible vitality to bear upon the work at hand. Your strength has sorely been taxed by imprisonment, banishment and disease, but rather than impairing, these have helped to broaden your sympathies—enlarging your vision so as to embrace the vast perspectives of history beyond any narrow limits of territory. . . ."

But then, his ideas—not orthodox by any means—had to contend with what was current and in vogue. This inevitably led to a conflict, the like of which has not been seen in the history of our long struggle for independence. If ever, India was verily at the crossroads.



It is also important to remember that these were the years that immediately preceded the memorable campaign of liberation Netaji led outside India's frontiers during the Second World War.

The speeches, writings and letters assembled in this book have been set in chronological order as far as practicable. Commentaries have been deliberately kept to the very minimum. The reader is expected to familiarise himself with the main current of Indian Politics of those crucial years and then read Subhas Chandra Bose in the original. It is hoped that this book will contribute to a scientific reappraisal of contemporary Indian history.

The year 1938 began for Netaji with a sojourn in Europe followed closely by assumption of the office of Congress President. The book therefore aptly begins with his mammoth address to the Haripura Congress. The first chapter is distinguished by some of his profound utterances relating not merely to the struggle against the alien power but also to the ultimate goal of all-round national reconstruction. To many of the older generation, they will be a rediscovery and to most of the new, a revelation. The reader will not fail to notice the yet indefinite forebodings of the coming schism with the orthodox national leadership.

The storm of controversy and the great national debate dominate the first half of 1939, culminating in the formation of the Forward Bloc and his virtual expulsion from the Congress party. The long series of his writings in the *Forward Bloc*, covering the latter half of 1939 and the first half of 1940, are by themselves a chronicle of events of unusual interest.

A clear and alternative leadership, defiant of all inhibitions, is seen to emerge on the Indian political scene in the beginning of 1940—fighting simultaneously on two fronts. The fight is continued with undiminished vigour even from inside the prison through the latter half of 1940. The hitherto unrevealed personal letters to Sarat Chandra Bose and others are historically valuable principally on account of their downright frankness. The letters to the Government from prison are undoubtedly worthy of permanent record. The book ends with his final say to the British Government in the shape of a letter to Lord Linlithgow, the then Viceroy of India.

The book is, on the whole, representative of Netaji's works during the period. We have no doubt, however, that a lot more could be added to make it complete in every sense. We invite friends possessing

other important material to place them in the hands of the Netaji Research Bureau so that they may be included in an enlarged and fully-indexed later edition.

The Netaji Research Bureau is grateful to all such friends who have helped in obtaining material and in the laborious process of preparing the manuscript and seeing it through the press. It is a pleasure to acknowledge in this connection the services of Shri Mukundalal Roy in typing the manuscript and the very great help of Shri Benode C. Chowdhuri in correcting the proofs. Our sincere thanks are due to Messrs Asia Publishing House for their interest, patience and cooperation.

*Netaji Research Bureau,  
38/2 Elgin Road, Calcutta-20,  
21st October, 1961*

SISIR K. BOSE



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*Subhas Chandra Bose*

FRONTISPIECE

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Part I

1938





# *The Haripura Address*

Presidential Address at the 51st Session of the Indian National Congress held at Haripura in February, 1938.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND FRIENDS,

I am deeply sensible of the honour you have done me by electing me as the President of the Indian National Congress for the coming year. I am not so presumptuous as to think for one moment that I am in any way worthy of that great honour. I regard it as a mark of your generosity and as a tribute to the youths of our country, but for whose cumulative contribution to our national struggle, we would not be where we are today. It is with a sense of fear and trepidation that I mount the tribune which has hitherto been graced by the most illustrious sons and daughters of our motherland. Conscious as I am of my numerous limitations, I can only hope and pray that with your sympathy and support I may be able in some small measure to do justice to the high office which you have called upon me to fill.

At the outset, may I voice your feelings in placing on record our profound grief at the death of Shrimati Swaruprani Nehru, Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose and Dr. Sarat Chandra Chatterji? Shrimati Swaruprani Nehru was to us not merely the worthy consort of Pandit Motilal and the revered mother of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Her suffering, sacrifice and service in the cause of India's freedom were such as any individual could feel proud of. As compatriots we mourn her death and our hearts go out in sympathy to Pandit Nehru and other members of the bereaved family.

To Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose India will always remain beholden for being the first to secure for her an honoured place in the modern scientific world. A nationalist to the core of his heart, Acharya Jagadish gave his life not merely to science, but to India as well. India knows it and is grateful for it. We convey our heart-felt sympathy to Lady Bose.

Through the untimely death of Dr. Sarat Chandra Chatterji, India has lost one of the brightest stars in her literary firmament.

His name, for years a household word in Bengal, was not less known in the literary world of India. But if Sarat Babu was great as a litterateur, he was perhaps greater as a patriot. The Congress in Bengal is distinctly poorer today because of his death. We send our sincerest condolence to the members of his family.

Before I proceed further I should like to bow my head in homage to the memory of those who have laid down their lives in the service of the country since the Congress met last year at Faizpur. I should mention especially those who died in prison or in internment or soon after release from internment. I should refer in particular to Sjt. Harendra Munshi, a political prisoner in the Dacca Central Jail, who laid down his life the other day as a result of hunger-strike. My feelings are still too lacerated to permit me to say much on this subject. I shall only ask you if there is not "something rotten in the state of Denmark" that such bright and promising souls as Jatin Das, Sardar Mahabir Singh, Ramkrishna Namadas, Mohit Mohan Maitra, Harendra Munshi and others should feel the urge not to live life but to end it.

When we take a bird's-eye view of the entire panorama of human history, the first thing that strikes us is the rise and fall of empires. In the East as well as in the West, empires have invariably gone through a process of expansion and after reaching the zenith of prosperity, have gradually shrunk into insignificance and sometimes death. The Roman Empire of the ancient times and the Turkish and Austro-Hungarian Empires of the modern period are striking examples of this law. The empires in India—the Maurya, the Gupta and the Mogul Empires—are no exceptions to this rule. In the face of these objective facts of history, can anyone be so bold as to maintain that there is in store a different fate for the British Empire? That Empire stands today at one of the crossroads of history. It will either go the way of other empires or it must transform itself into a federation of free nations. Either course is open to it. The Czarist Empire collapsed in 1917 but out of its debris sprang the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. There is still time for Great Britain to take a leaf out of Russian history. Will she do so?

The British Empire is a hybrid phenomenon in politics. It is a peculiar combination of self-governing countries, partially self-governing dependencies and autocratically-governed colonies. Constitutional device and human ingenuity may bolster up this

combination for a while, but not for ever. If the internal incongruities are not removed in good time, then quite apart from external pressure, the Empire is sure to break down under its own strain. But can the British Empire transform itself into a federation of free nations with one bold sweep? It is for the British people to answer this question. One thing, however, is certain. This transformation will be possible only if the British people become free in their own homes—only if Great Britain becomes a socialist state. There is an inseparable connection between the capitalist ruling classes in Great Britain and the colonies abroad. As Lenin pointed out long ago, “reaction in Great Britain is strengthened and fed by the enslavement of a number of nations.” The British aristocracy and bourgeoisie exist primarily because there are colonies and overseas dependencies to exploit. The emancipation of the latter will undoubtedly strike at the very existence of the capitalist ruling classes in Great Britain and precipitate the establishment of a socialist regime in that country. It should, therefore, be clear that a socialist order in Great Britain is impossible of achievement without the liquidation of colonialism and that we who are fighting for the political freedom of India and other enslaved countries of the British Empire are incidentally fighting for the economic emancipation of the British people as well.

It is a well-known truism that every empire is based on the policy of divide and rule. But I doubt if any empire in the world has practised this policy so skilfully, systematically and ruthlessly as Great Britain. In accordance with this policy, before power was handed over to the Irish people, Ulster was separated from the rest of Ireland. Similarly, before any power is handed over to the Palestinians, the Jews will be separated from the Arabs. An internal partition is necessary in order to neutralise the transference of power. The same principle of partition appears in a different form in the new Indian Constitution. Here we find an attempt to separate the different communities and put them into water-tight compartments. And in the Federal Scheme there is juxtaposition of autocratic Princes and democratically elected representatives from British India. If the new Constitution is finally rejected, whether owing to the opposition of British India or owing to the refusal of the Princes to joining it, I have no doubt that British ingenuity will seek some other constitutional device for partitioning India and thereby neutralising the transference of power to the Indian people.

Therefore, any constitution for India which emanates from Whitehall must be examined with the utmost care and caution.

The policy of divide and rule, though it has its obvious advantages, is by no means an unmixed blessing for the ruling power. As a matter of fact, it creates new problems and new embarrassments. Great Britain seems to be caught in the meshes of her own political dualism resulting from her policy of divide and rule. Will she please the Muslim or the Hindu in India? Will she favour the Arab or the Jew in Palestine—the Arab or the Kurd in Iraq? Will she side with the King or the Wafd in Egypt? The same dualism is visible outside the Empire. In the case of Spain, British politicians are torn between such alternatives as Franco and the lawful Government—and in the wider field of European politics, between France and Germany. The contradictions and inconsistencies in Britain's foreign policy are the direct outcome of the heterogeneous composition of her Empire. The British Cabinet has to please the Jews because she cannot ignore Jewish high finance. On the other hand, the India Office and Foreign Office have to placate the Arabs because of Imperial interests in the Near East and in India. The only means whereby Great Britain can free herself from such contradictions and inconsistencies is by transforming the Empire into a federation of free nations. If she could do that, she would be performing a miracle in history. But if she fails, she must reconcile herself to the gradual dismemberment of a vast empire where the sun is supposed not to set. Let the lesson of the Austro-Hungarian Empire be not lost on the British people.

The British Empire at the present moment is suffering from strain at a number of points. Within the Empire, in the extreme West, there is Ireland and in the extreme East, India. In the middle lies Palestine with the adjoining countries of Egypt and Iraq. Outside the Empire, there is the pressure exerted by Italy in the Mediterranean and Japan in the Far East, both of these countries being militant, aggressive and imperialist. Against this background of unrest stands Soviet Russia, whose very existence strikes terror into the heart of the ruling classes in every Imperialist State. How long can the British Empire withstand the cumulative effect of this pressure and strain?

Today, Britain can hardly call herself "the Mistress of the Seas." Her phenomenal rise in the 18th and 19th centuries was the result of her sea power. Her decline as an empire in the 20th century

will be the outcome of the emergence of a new factor in world history—Air Force. It was due to this new factor, Air Force, that an impudent Italy could successfully challenge a fully mobilised British Navy in the Mediterranean. Britain can rearm on land, sea and air up to the utmost limit. Battleships may still stand up to bombing from the air, but air force as a powerful element in modern warfare has come to stay. Distances have been obliterated and despite all anti-aircraft defences, London lies at the mercy of any bombing squadron from a continental centre. In short, air force has revolutionised modern warfare, destroyed the insularity of Great Britain and rudely disturbed the balance of power in world politics. The clay feet of a gigantic empire now stand exposed as these have never been before.

Amid this interplay of world forces India emerges much stronger than she has ever been before. Ours is a vast country with a population of 350 millions. Our vastness in area and in population has hitherto been a source of weakness. It is today a source of strength if we can only stand united and boldly face our rulers. From the standpoint of Indian unity the first thing to remember is that the division between British India and the Indian States is an entirely artificial one. India is one and the hopes and aspirations of the people of British India and of the Indian States are identical. Our goal is that of an Independent India and in my view that goal can be attained only through a federal republic in which the Provinces and the States will be willing partners. The Congress has, time and again, offered its sympathy and moral support to the movement carried on by the States' subjects for the establishment of democratic government in what is known as Indian India. It may be that at this moment our hands are so full that the Congress is not in a position to do more for our compatriots in the States. But even today there is nothing to prevent individual Congressmen from actively espousing the cause of the States' subjects and participating in their struggle. There are people in the Congress like myself who would like to see the Congress participating more actively in the movement of the States' subject. I personally hope that in the near future it will be possible for the Indian National Congress to take a forward step and offer a helping hand to our fellow-fighters in the States. Let us not forget that they need our sympathy and our help.

Talking of Indian unity the next thing that strikes us is the problem of the minorities. The Congress has, from time to time, declared

its policy on this question. The latest authoritative pronouncement made by the All-India Congress Committee at its meeting in Calcutta in October, 1937, runs thus:

The Congress has solemnly and repeatedly declared its policy in regard to the rights of the minorities in India and has stated that it considers it its duty to protect these rights and ensure the widest possible scope for the development of these minorities and their participation in the fullest measure in the political, economic and cultural life of the nation. The objective of the Congress is an independent and united India where no class or group or majority or minority may exploit another to its own advantage, and where all the elements in the nation may co-operate together for the common good and the advancement of the people of India. This objective of unity and mutual co-operation in a common freedom does not mean the suppression in any way of the rich variety and cultural diversity of Indian life, which have to be preserved in order to give freedom and opportunity to the individual as well as to each group to develop unhindered according to its capacity and inclination.

In view, however, of attempts having been made to misinterpret the Congress policy in this regard, the All-India Congress Committee desire to reiterate this policy. The Congress has included in its resolution on Fundamental Rights that:

- (i) Every citizen of India has the right of free expression of opinion, the right of free association and combination, and the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, for a purpose not opposed to law or morality;
- (ii) Every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practise his religion, subject to the public order and morality;
- (iii) The culture, language and script of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected;
- (iv) All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex;
- (v) No disability attaches to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex, in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling;

- (vi) All citizens have equal rights and duties in regard to wells, tanks, roads, schools and places of public resort, maintained out of State, or local funds, or dedicated by private persons for the use of the general public;
- (vii) The State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions;
- (viii) The franchise shall be on the basis of universal adult suffrage;
- (ix) Every citizen is free to move throughout India and to stay and settle in any part thereof, to acquire property and to follow any trade or calling, and to be treated equally with regard to legal prosecution or protection in all parts of India.

These clauses of the Fundamental Rights resolution make it clear that there should be no interference in matter of conscience, religion, or culture, and a minority is entitled to keep its personal law without any change in this respect being imposed by the majority.

The position of the Congress in regard to the communal decision has been repeatedly made clear in Congress resolutions and finally in the Election Manifesto issued last year. The Congress is opposed to this decision as it is anti-national, anti-democratic and is a barrier to Indian freedom and the development of Indian unity. Nevertheless, the Congress has declared that a change in or supersession of the Communal Decision should only be brought about by the mutual agreement of the parties concerned. The Congress has always welcomed and is prepared to take advantage of any opportunity to bring about such a change by mutual agreement.

In all matters affecting the minorities in India, the Congress wishes to proceed by their co-operation and through their goodwill in a common undertaking and for the realization of a common aim which is the freedom and betterment of all the people of India.

The time is opportune for renewing our efforts for the final solution of this problem. I believe I am voicing the feelings of all Congressmen when I say that we are eager to do our very best to arrive at an agreed solution, consistent with the fundamental principles of nationalism. It is not necessary for me to go into



details as to the lines on which a solution should take place. Much useful ground has already been covered in past conferences and conversations. I shall merely add that only by emphasising our common interests, economic and political, can we cut across communal divisions and dissensions. A policy of live and let live in matters religious and an understanding in matters economic and political should be our objective. Though the Muslim problem looms large whenever we think of the question of the minorities and though we are anxious to settle this problem finally, I must say that the Congress is equally desirous of doing justice to other minorities and especially the so-called depressed classes whose number is a very large one. I would put it to the members of the minority communities in India to consider dispassionately if they have anything to fear when the Congress programme is put into operation. The Congress stands for the political and economic rights of the Indian people as a whole. If it succeeds in executing its programme, the minority communities would be benefited as much as any other section of the Indian population. Moreover, if after the capture of political power, national reconstruction takes place on socialistic lines—as I have no doubt it will—it is the “have-nots” who will benefit at the expense of the “haves” and the Indian masses have to be classified among the “have-nots.” There remains but one question which may be a source of anxiety to the minorities, viz., religion and that aspect of culture that is based on religion. On this question the Congress policy is one of live and let live—a policy of complete non-interference in matters of conscience, religion and culture as well as of cultural autonomy for the different linguistic areas. The Muslims have, therefore, nothing to fear in the event of India winning her freedom—on the contrary, they have everything to gain. So far as the religious and social disabilities of the so-called depressed classes are concerned, it is well known that during the last seventeen years the Congress has left no stone unturned in the effort to remove them, and I have no doubt that the day is not far off when such disabilities will be things of the past.

I shall now proceed to consider the method which the Congress should pursue in the years to come as well as its role in the national struggle. I believe more than ever that the method should be Satyagraha or non-violent non-co-operation in the widest sense of the term, including civil disobedience. It would not be correct to

call our method passive resistance. Satyagraha, as I understand it, is not merely passive resistance but active resistance as well though that activity must be of a non-violent character. It is necessary to remind our countrymen that Satyagraha or non-violent non-co-operation may have to be resorted to again. The acceptance of office in the Provinces as an experimental measure should not lead us to think that our future activity is to be confined within the limits of strict constitutionalism. There is every possibility that a determined opposition to the forcible inauguration of Federation may land us in another big campaign of civil disobedience.

In our struggle for independence we may adopt either of two alternatives. We may continue our fight until we have our full freedom and in the meantime decline to use any power that we may capture while on the march. We may, on the other hand, go on consolidating our position while we continue our struggle for Purna Swaraj or complete independence. From the point of view of principle, both the alternatives are equally acceptable and *a priori* considerations need not worry us. But we should consider very carefully at every stage as to which alternative would be more conducive to our national advancement. In either case, the ultimate stage in our progress will be the severance of the British connection. When that severance takes place and there is no trace left of British domination, we shall be in a position to determine our future relations with Great Britain through a treaty of alliance voluntarily entered into by both parties. What our future relations with Great Britain will or should be, it is too early to say. That will depend to a large extent on the attitude of the British people themselves. On this point I have been greatly impressed by the attitude of President de Valera. Like the President of Eire, I should also say that we have no enmity towards the British people. We are fighting Great Britain and we want the fullest liberty to determine our future relations with her. But once we have real self-determination, there is no reason why we should not enter into the most cordial relations with the British people.

I am afraid there is a lack of clarity in the minds of many Congressmen as to the role of the Congress in the history of our national struggle. I know that there are friends who think that after freedom is won, the Congress Party having achieved its objective, should wither away. Such a conception is entirely erroneous. The party that wins freedom for India should be also the party that

will put into effect the entire programme of post-war reconstruction. Only those who have won power can handle it properly. If other people are pitchforked into seats of power which they were not responsible for capturing, they will lack that strength, confidence and idealism which is indispensable for revolutionary reconstruction. It is this which accounts for the difference in the record of the Congress and non-Congress ministries in the very narrow sphere of Provincial Autonomy.

No, there can be no question of the Congress Party withering away after political freedom has been won. On the contrary, the Party will have to take over power, assume responsibility for administration and put through its programme of reconstruction. Only then will it fulfil its role. If it were forcibly to liquidate itself, chaos would follow. Looking at post-war Europe, we find that only in those countries has there been orderly and continuous progress where the party which seized power undertook the work of reconstruction.

I know that it will be argued that the continuance of a party in such circumstances, standing behind the State, will convert that State into a totalitarian one; but I cannot admit the charge. The State will possibly become a totalitarian one, if there be only one party as in countries like Russia, Germany and Italy. But there is no reason why other parties should be banned. Moreover, the party itself will have a democratic basis, unlike, for instance, the Nazi Party which is based on the "leader principle." The existence of more than one party and the democratic basis of the Congress Party will prevent the future Indian State becoming a totalitarian one. Further, the democratic basis of the party will ensure that leaders are not thrust upon the people from above, but are elected from below.

Though it may be somewhat premature to give a detailed plan of reconstruction, we might as well consider some of the principles according to which our future social reconstruction should take place. I have no doubt in my mind that our chief national problems relating to the eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease and to scientific production and distribution can be effectively tackled only along socialistic lines. The very first thing which our future national government will have to do, would be to set up a commission for drawing up a comprehensive plan of reconstruction. This plan will have two parts—an immediate programme and a

long-period programme. In drawing up the first part, the immediate objectives which will have to be kept in view will be threefold—first, to prepare the country for self-sacrifice; secondly, to unify India; and thirdly, to give scope for local and cultural autonomy. The second and third objectives may appear to be contradictory, but they are not really so. Whatever political talent or genius we may possess as a people, will have to be used in reconciling these two objectives. We shall have to unify the country so that we may be able to hold India against any foreign invasion. While unifying the country through a strong central government, we shall have to put all the minority communities as well as the Provinces at their ease, by allowing them a large measure of autonomy in cultural as well as governmental affairs. Special efforts will be needed to keep our people together when the load of foreign domination is removed, because alien rule has demoralised and disorganised us to a degree. To promote national unity we shall have to develop our lingua franca and a common script. Further, with the help of such modern scientific contrivances as aeroplanes, telephone, radio, films, television, etc., we shall have to bring the different parts of India closer to one another and through a common educational policy we shall have to foster a common spirit among the entire population. So far as our lingua franca is concerned, I am inclined to think that the distinction between Hindi and Urdu is an artificial one. The most natural lingua franca would be a mixture of the two, such as is spoken in daily life in large portions of the country and this common language may be written in either of the two scripts, Nagari or Urdu. I am aware that there are people in India who strongly favour either of the two scripts to the exclusion of the other. Our policy, however, should not be one of exclusion. We should allow the fullest latitude to use either script. At the same time, I am inclined to think that the ultimate solution, and the best solution would be the adoption of a script that would bring us into line with the rest of the world. Perhaps, some of our countrymen will gape with horror when they hear of the adoption of the Roman script, but I would beg them to consider this problem from the scientific and historical point of view. If we do that, we shall realise at once that there is nothing sacrosanct in a script. The Nagari script, as we know it today, has passed through several phases of evolution. Besides, most of the major Provinces of India have their own script and there is the Urdu script which is used

largely by the Urdu-speaking public in India and by both Muslims and Hindus in Provinces like the Punjab and Sind. In view of such diversity, the choice of a uniform script for the whole of India should be made in a thoroughly scientific and impartial spirit, free from bias of every kind. I confess that there was a time when I felt that it would be anti-national to adopt a foreign script. But my visit to Turkey in 1934 was responsible for converting me. I then realised for the first time what a great advantage it was to have the same script as the rest of the world. So far as our masses are concerned, since more than 90 per cent are illiterate and are not familiar with any script, it will not matter to them which script we introduce when they are educated. The Roman script will, moreover, facilitate their learning a European language. I am quite aware how unpopular the immediate adoption of the Roman script would be in our country. Nevertheless, I would beg my countrymen to consider what would be the wisest solution in the long run.

With regard to the long-period programme for a Free India, the first problem to tackle is that of our increasing population. I do not desire to go into the theoretical question as to whether India is over-populated or not. I simply want to point out that where poverty, starvation and disease are stalking the land, we cannot afford to have our population mounting up by thirty million during a single decade. If the population goes up by leaps and bounds, as it has done in the recent past, our plans are likely to fall through. It will, therefore, be desirable to restrict our population until we are able to feed, clothe and educate those who already exist. It is not necessary at this stage to prescribe the methods that should be adopted to prevent a further increase in population, but I would urge that public attention be drawn to this question.

Regarding reconstruction, our principal problem will be how to eradicate poverty from our country. That will require a radical reform of our land system, including the abolition of landlordism. Agricultural indebtedness will have to be liquidated and provision made for cheap credit for the rural population. An extension of the co-operative movement will be necessary for the benefit of both producers and consumers. Agriculture will have to be put on a scientific basis with a view to increasing the yield from the land.

To solve the economic problem agricultural improvement will not be enough. A comprehensive scheme of industrial develop-

ment under state-ownerships and state-control will be indispensable. A new industrial system will have to be built up in place of the old one which has collapsed as a result of mass production abroad and alien rule at home. The planning commission will have to carefully consider and decide which of the home industries could be revived despite the competition of modern factories and in which sphere large scale production should be encouraged. However much we may dislike modern industrialism and condemn the evils which follow in its train, we cannot go back to the pre-industrial era, even if we desire to do so. It is well, therefore, that we should reconcile ourselves to industrialisation and devise means to minimise its evils and at the same time explore the possibilities of reviving cottage industries where there is a possibility of their surviving the inevitable competition of factories. In a country like India, there will be plenty of room for cottage industries, especially in the case of industries including hand-spinning and hand-weaving allied to agriculture.

Last but not the least, the State on the advice of a planning commission, will have to adopt a comprehensive scheme for gradually socialising our entire agricultural and industrial system in the spheres of both production and appropriation. Extra capital will have to be procured for this, whether through internal or external loans or through inflation.

Opposing or resisting the provincial part of the Constitution will be hardly possible now, since the Congress Party has accepted office in seven out of eleven provinces. All that could be done would be to strengthen and consolidate the Congress as a result of it. I am one of those who were not in favour of taking office—not because there was something inherently wrong in doing so, not because no good could come out of that policy, but because it was apprehended that the evil effects of office acceptance would out-weigh the good. Today I can only hope that my forebodings were unfounded.

How can we strengthen and consolidate the Congress while our Ministers are in office? The first thing to do is to change the composition and character of the bureaucracy. If this is not done, the Congress Party may come to grief. In every country, the Ministers come and go, but the steel frame of the permanent services remains. If that is not altered in composition and character, the governmental party and its cabinet are likely to prove ineffective

in putting their principles into practice. This is what happened in the case of the Social Democratic Party in Post-War Germany and perhaps in the case of the Labour Party in Great Britain in 1924 and 1929. It is the permanent services who really rule in every country. In India they have been created by the British and in the higher ranks they are largely British in composition. Their outlook and mentality are in most cases neither Indian nor national and a national policy cannot be executed until the permanent services become national in outlook and mentality. The difficulty, of course, will be that the higher ranks of the permanent services being, under the Statute, directly under the Secretary of State for India and not under the Provincial Government, it will not be easy to alter their composition.

Secondly, the Congress Ministers in the different Provinces should, while they are in office, introduce schemes of reconstruction in the spheres of education, health, prohibition, prison reforms, irrigation, industry, land reform, workers' welfare, etc. In this matter, attempts should be made to have, as far as possible, a uniform policy for the whole of India. This uniformity could be brought about in either of two ways. The Congress Ministers in the different Provinces could themselves come together—as the Labour Ministers did in October, 1937, in Calcutta—and draw up a uniform programme. Over and above this, the Congress Working Committee, which is the supreme executive of the Congress, could lend a helping hand by giving directions to the different departments of the Congress-controlled provincial governments in the light of such advice as it may get from its own experts. This will mean that the members of the Congress Working Committee should be conversant with the problems that come within the purview of the Congress governments in the Provinces. It is not intended that they should go into the details of administration. All that is needed is that they should have a general understanding of the different problems so that they could lay down the broad lines of policy. In this respect, the Congress Working Committee could do much more than it has hitherto done and unless it does so, I do not see how that body can keep an effective control over the different Congress ministries.

At this stage I should like to say something more about the role of the Congress Working Committee. This Committee, in my judgement, is not merely the directing brain of the national army of

fighters for freedom. It is also the Shadow Cabinet of Independent India and it should function accordingly. This is not an invention of my own. It is the role which has been assigned to similar bodies in other countries that have fought for their national emancipation. I am one of those who think in terms of a Free India—who visualise a national government in this country within the brief span of our own life. It is consequently natural for us to urge that the Working Committee should feel and function as the Shadow Cabinet of a Free India. This is what President de Valera's Republican Government did when it was fighting the British Government and was on the run. And this is what the Executive of the Wafd Party in Egypt did before it got into office. The members of the Working Committee while carrying on their day to day work should accordingly study the problems they will have to tackle in the event of their capturing political power.

More important than the question of the proper working of the Congress governments is the immediate problem of how to oppose the inauguration of the federal part of the Constitution. The Congress attitude towards the proposed Federal Scheme has been clearly stated in the resolution adopted by the Working Committee at Wardha on February 4, 1938, which will be placed before this Congress after the Subjects Committee has considered it. That resolution says:

The Congress has rejected the new Constitution and declared that a constitution for India which can be accepted by the people must be based on Independence and can only be framed by the people themselves by means of a Constituent Assembly without the interference by any foreign authority. Adhering to this policy of rejection, the Congress has, however, permitted the formation in Provinces of Congress Ministries with a view to strengthening the nation in its struggle for Independence. In regard to the proposed Federation, no such consideration applies even provisionally, or for a period, and the imposition of this Federation, will do grave injuries to India and tighten the bonds which hold her under the subjection of an imperialist domination. This scheme of Federation excludes from the sphere of responsibility the vital function of a Government.

The Congress is not opposed to the idea of Federation but a real Federation must, even apart from the question of responsibility,



consist of free units, enjoying more or less the same measure of freedom and civil liberty and representation by a democratic process of election. Indian States participating in the Federation should approximate to the Provinces in the establishment of representative institutions, responsible Government, civil liberties and the method of election to the Federal House. Otherwise Federation as it is now contemplated will, instead of building Indian unity, encourage separatist tendencies and involve the States in internal and external conflict.

The Congress, therefore, reiterates its condemnation of the proposed scheme and calls upon Provincial and Local Congress Committees and the people generally as well as Provincial Governments and Ministries to prevent its inauguration.

In the event of an attempt being made to impose it, despite the declared will of the people, such an attempt must be combated in every way and the Provincial Governments and Ministries must refuse to co-operate with it.

In case such a contingency arises, the A.I.C.C. is authorised and directed to determine the line of action to be pursued in this regard.

I should like to add some more arguments to explain our attitude of uncompromising hostility towards the proposed Federation. One of the most objectionable features of the Federal Scheme relates to the commercial and financial safeguards in the new Constitution. Not only will the people continue to be deprived of any power over defence or foreign policy, but the major portion of the expenditure will also be entirely out of popular control. According to the budget of the Central Government for the year 1937-38, the army expenditure comes to 44.61 crores of Rupees (£33.46 million) out of a total expenditure of 77.90 crores of Rupees (£58.42 million)—that is, roughly 57 per cent of the total expenditure of the Central Government. It appears that the reserved side of Federal Government which will be controlled by the Governor-General will handle about 80 per cent of the Federal expenditure. Moreover, bodies like the Reserve Bank and the Federal Railways Authority are already created or will be created which will work as *imperium in imperio* uncontrolled by a Federal Legislature. The Legislature will be deprived of the powers it possesses at present to direct and influence railway policy, and it will not have any voice in determining the

currency and exchange policy of the country which has a vital bearing on its economic development.

The fact that external affairs will be a reserved subject under the Federal Government will prejudicially affect the freedom of the Indian Legislature to conclude trade agreements and will seriously restrict, in effect, fiscal autonomy. The Federal Government will not be under any constitutional obligation to place such trade agreements before the Legislature for their ratification, even as they decline at present to give an undertaking to place the Indo-British Trade Agreement before the Indian Legislative Assembly. The so-called fiscal autonomy convention will have no meaning unless it is stipulated that no trade agreement on behalf of India shall be signed by any party without its ratification by the Indian Legislature. In this connection, I should like to state that I am definitely of opinion that India should enter into bilateral trade agreements with countries like Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy and the United States of America with whom she had close trade relations in the past. But under the new Constitution, it will not be within the power of the Federal Legislature to force the Federal Government to enter into such bilateral trade agreements.

The iniquitous and inequitable commercial safeguards embodied in the Act will make it impossible for any effective measure to be adopted in order to protect and promote Indian national industries especially where they might, as they often do, conflict with British commercial or industrial interests. In addition to the Governor-General's special responsibility to see that provisions with regard to discrimination, as laid down in the Act, are duly carried out, it is also his duty to prevent any action which would subject British goods imported into India to any kind of discriminatory or penal treatment. A careful study of these stringent and wide provisions will show that India can adopt no measures against British competition which the Governor-General cannot, in effect, stultify or veto, whether in the legislative or in the administrative sphere. It is, of course, preposterous to permit foreigners in this country to compete with the nationals on equal terms and there can be no genuine Swaraj if India is to be denied the power to devise and adopt a national economic policy including the right, if her interests so require, of differentiating between nationals and non-nationals. In a famous article in *Young India*, under the caption "The Giant and the Dwarf," written soon after the conclusion of the Gandhi-

Irwin Pact in 1931, Mahatma Gandhi declared plainly that "to talk of no discrimination between Indian interests and English or European, is to perpetuate Indian helotage. What is equality of rights between a giant and a dwarf?" Even the meagre powers enjoyed by the Central Legislature at present to enact a measure like the reservation of the Indian coastal trade for Indian-owned and Indian-managed vessels has been taken away under the so-called reformed Constitution. Shipping is a vital industry which is essential for defensive as well as for economic purposes, but all the accepted and legitimate methods of developing this key industry including those adopted even by several British Dominions are henceforth rendered impossible for India. To justify such limitations on our sovereignty on the ground of "reciprocity" and "partnership" is literally to add insult to injury. The right of the future Indian Parliament to differentiate or discriminate between nationals and non-nationals, whenever Indian interests require it, should remain intact and this right we cannot sacrifice on any account. I would like in this connection to cite the Irish parallel. The Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act of 1935 provides for a distinct Irish citizenship in connection with the electoral system, entry into public life, merchant shipping law, aircraft, as also in connection with special privileges which it is thought proper to reserve for Irish nationals, such as those conferred through measures for assisting Irish industry. Irish citizenship, in other words, is distinct from British, which cannot claim equal rights in the State of Eire (or Ireland) on the basis of British citizenship, which is not recognised there. I feel that India must similarly seek to develop her own distinct nationality and establish a citizenship of her own.

While on the question of fiscal autonomy and commercial safeguards, I might refer briefly to the need of an active foreign trade policy for India. India's foreign trade should be viewed not in a haphazard or piecemeal manner as is often done in order to provide some immediate or temporary benefit to British industry, but in a comprehensive manner so as to co-ordinate India's economic development with its export trade on the one hand and its external obligation on the other. The very nature of India's export trade makes it essential that it should not have any restrictive agreement with England such as would jeopardise its trade with the various non-Empire countries which have been in several respects its best customers, or such as would tend to weaken India's bargaining

power *vis-à-vis* other countries. It is unfortunate that the protected negotiations for an Indo-British Trade Agreement are still proceeding, while the Ottawa Agreement, even after the expiry of its notice-period and despite the decision of the Legislative Assembly to terminate it, still continues, and along with the differential duties on British steel and textiles, the said Ottawa Agreement secures the prevailing advantages for British industries. There is no doubt that under the existing political conditions, any trade agreement between England and India is bound to be of an unequal character because our present political relationship would weigh the scales heavily in favour of England. There is also no doubt that the British preferential system is political in origin and before we permit non-Indian vested interests to be established or consolidated in this country under the shelter of a trade agreement, we should be careful as to its political repercussions and economic consequences. I trust that the present Indo-British Trade negotiations will not be allowed to impede the conclusion of bilateral trade agreements with other countries whenever possible and that no such trade agreement will be signed by the Government of India unless it is ratified by the Indian Legislature.

From the above, it will be quite clear that there is no analogy between the powers of the Provincial Ministries and those of the proposed Federal Ministry. Moreover, the composition of the Federal Legislature is reactionary to a degree. The total population of the Indian States is roughly 24 per cent of that of the whole of India. Nevertheless, the Rulers of the States, not their subjects, have been given 33 per cent of the seats in the Lower House and 40 per cent in the Upper House of the Federal Legislature. In these circumstances, there is no possibility, in my opinion, of the Congress altering its attitude towards the Federal Scheme at any time. On our success in resisting the imposition of Federation by the British Government will depend our immediate political future. We have to fight Federation by all legitimate and peaceful means—not merely along constitutional lines—and in the last resort, we may have to resort to mass civil disobedience which is the ultimate sanction we have in our hands. There can be little doubt that in the event of such a campaign being started in the future, the movement will not be confined to British India but will spread among the States' subjects.

To put up an effective fight in the near future, it is necessary to put our own house in order. The awakening among our masses

during the last few years has been so tremendous that new problems have arisen concerning our party organisation. Meetings attended by fifty thousand men and women are a usual occurrence nowadays. It is sometimes found that to control such meetings and demonstrations, our machinery is not adequate. Apart from these passing demonstrations, there is the bigger problem of mobilising this phenomenal mass energy and enthusiasm and directing them along proper lines. But have we got a well-disciplined Volunteer Corps for this purpose? Have we got a cadre of officers for our national service? Do we provide any training for our budding leaders, for our promising young workers? The answers to these questions are too patent to need elaboration. We have not yet provided all these requirements of a modern political party, but it is high time that we did. A disciplined Volunteer Corps manned by trained officers is exceedingly necessary. Moreover, education and training should be provided for our political workers so that we may produce a better type of leaders in future. This sort of training is provided by political parties in Britain through Summer Schools and other institutions—and is a speciality in totalitarian states. With all respect to our workers who have played a glorious part in our struggle, I must confess that there is room for more talent in our party. This defect can be made up partly by recruiting promising young men for the Congress and partly by providing education and training for those whom we already have. Everybody must have observed how some European countries have been dealing with this problem. Though our ideals and methods of training are quite different from theirs, it will be admitted on all hands that a thorough scientific training is a requisite for our workers. Further, an institution like the Labour Service Corps of the Nazis deserves careful study and, with suitable modification may prove beneficial to India.

While dealing with the question of enforcing discipline within our own party, we have to consider a problem which has been causing worry and embarrassment to many of us. I am referring to organisations like the Trade Union Congress and the Kisan Sabhas and their relations with the Indian National Congress. There are two opposing schools of thought on this question—those who condemn any organisations that are outside the Congress and those who advocate them. My own view is that we cannot abolish such organisations by ignoring or condemning them. They exist as objective facts and since they have come into existence and show

no signs of liquidating themselves, it should be manifest that there is a historical necessity behind them. Moreover, such organisations are to be found in other countries. I am afraid that whether we like it or not, we have to reconcile ourselves to their existence. The only question is how the Congress should treat them. Obviously, such organisations should not appear as a challenge to the National Congress which is the organ of mass struggle for capturing political power. They should, therefore, be inspired by Congress ideals and methods and work in close co-operation with the Congress. To ensure this, Congress workers should in large numbers participate in trade union and peasant organisations. From my own experience of trade union work I feel that this could easily be done without landing oneself in conflict or inconsistency. Co-operation between the Congress and the other two organisations could be facilitated if the latter deal primarily with the economic grievances of the workers and peasants and treat the Congress as a common platform for all those who strive for the political emancipation of their country.

This brings us to the vexed problem of the collective affiliation of workers' and peasants' organisations of the Congress. Personally, I hold the view that the day will come when we shall have to grant this affiliation in order to bring all progressive and anti-imperialist organisations under the influence and control of the Congress. There will, of course, be difference of opinion as to the manner and the extent to which this affiliation should be given and the character and stability of such organisations will have to be examined before affiliation could be agreed to. In Russia, the united front of the Soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers played a dominant part in the October Revolution—but, on the contrary, in Great Britain we find that the British Trade Union Congress exerts a moderating influence on the National Executive of the Labour Party. In India, we shall have to consider carefully what sort of influence organisations like the Trade Union Congress and the Kisan Sabhas will exert on the Indian National Congress in the event of affiliation being granted and we should not forget that there is the possibility that the former may not have a radical outlook if their immediate economic grievances are not involved. In any case, quite apart from the question of collective affiliation, there should be the closest co-operation between the National Congress and other anti-imperialist organisations and this object would be facilitated by the latter adopting the principles and methods of the former.

There has been a great deal of controversy over the question of forming a party, like the Congress Socialist Party, within the Congress. I hold no brief for the Congress Socialist Party and I am not a member of it. Nevertheless, I must say that I have been in agreement with its general principles and policy from the very beginning. In the first place, it is desirable for the leftist elements to be consolidated into one party. Secondly, a leftist bloc can have a *raison d'être* only if it is socialist in character. There are friends who object to such a bloc being called a party, but to my mind it is quite immaterial whether you call that bloc a group, league or party. Within the limits prescribed by the Constitution of the Indian National Congress, it is quite possible for a leftist bloc to have a socialist programme, in which case it can be very well called a group, league or party. But the role of the Congress Socialist Party, or any other party of the same sort, should be that of a left-wing group. Socialism is not an immediate problem for us—nevertheless, socialist propaganda is necessary to prepare the country for socialism when political freedom has been won. And that propaganda can be conducted only by a party like the Congress Socialist Party, which stands for and believes in Socialism.

There is one problem in which I have been taking a deep personal interest for some years and in connection with which I should like to make my submission—I mean the question of a foreign policy for India and of developing international contacts. I attach great importance to this work because I believe that in the years to come, international developments will favour our struggle in India. But we must have a correct appreciation of the world situation at every stage and should know how to take advantage of it. The lesson of Egypt stands before us as an example. Egypt won her Treaty of Alliance with Great Britain without firing a shot, simply because she knew how to take advantage of the Anglo-Italian tension in the Mediterranean.

In connection with our foreign policy, the first suggestion that I have to make is that we should not be influenced by the internal politics of any country or the form of its state. We shall find in every country men and women who will sympathise with Indian freedom, no matter what their own political views may be. In this matter we should take a leaf out of Soviet diplomacy. Though Soviet Russia is a communist state, her diplomats have not hesitated to make alliances with non-socialist states and have not declined

sympathy or support coming from any quarter. We should, therefore, aim at developing a nucleus of men and women in every country who feel sympathetic towards India. To create and develop such a nucleus, propaganda through the foreign press, through Indian-made films and through art exhibitions would be helpful. The Chinese, for example, have made themselves exceedingly popular in Europe through their art exhibitions. Above all, personal contacts are necessary. Without such personal contacts it would be difficult to make India popular in other countries. Indian students abroad could also help in this work, provided we in India look to their needs and requirements. There should be closer contact between Indian students abroad and the Indian National Congress at home. If we could send out cultural and educational films made in India, I am sure that India and her culture would become known and appreciated by people abroad. Such films would prove exceedingly useful to Indian students and Indian residents in other countries, who at present are like our non-official ambassadors.

I do not like the word propaganda—there is an air of falsity about it. But I insist that we should make India and her culture known to the world. I say this because I am aware that such efforts will be welcomed in every country in Europe and America. If we go ahead with this work, we shall be preparing the basis for our future embassies and legations in different lands. We should not neglect Great Britain either. We have even in that country a small but influential group of men and women who are genuinely sympathetic towards Indian aspirations. Among the rising generation and students, in particular, interest in and sympathy for India is rapidly on the increase. One has only to visit the Universities of Great Britain to realise that.

To carry on this work effectively, the Indian National Congress should have its trusted agents in Europe, Asia, Africa and in North, Central and South America. It is a pity that we have so far neglected Central and South America where there is profound interest in India. The Congress should be assisted in this work of developing international contacts by cultural organisations in India, working in the field of international culture and by the Indian Chambers of Commerce working in the sphere of international commerce. Further, Indians should make it a point to attend every international Congress or Conference; participation in such conferences is a very useful and healthy form of propaganda for India.



While talking of international contacts, I should remove a misgiving which may be present in some minds. Developing international contacts does not mean intriguing against the British Government. We need not go in for such intrigues and all our methods should be aboveboard. The propaganda that goes on against India all over the world is to the effect that India is an uncivilised country and it is inferred therefrom that the British are needed in order to civilise us. As a reply, we have only to let the world know what we are and what our culture is like. If we can do that, we shall create such a volume of international sympathy in our favour that India's case will become irresistible before the bar of world opinion.

I should not forget to refer to the problems, the difficulties and the trials which face our countrymen in different parts of Asia and Africa—notably in Zanzibar, Kenya, South Africa, Malaya and Ceylon. The Congress has always taken the keenest interest in their affairs and will continue to do so in future. If we have not been able to do more for them it is only because we are still slaves at home. A free India will be a healthy and potent factor in world politics and will be able to look after the interests of its nationals abroad.

I must in this connection stress the desirability and necessity of developing closer cultural relations with our neighbours, viz., Persia, Afghanistan, Nepal, China, Burma, Siam, Malaya States, East Indies and Ceylon. It would be good for both parties if they knew more of us and we knew more of them. With Burma and Ceylon, in particular, we should have the most intimate cultural intercourse, in view of our agelong contacts.

Friends, I am sorry I have taken more of your time than I had intended at first, but I am now nearing the end of my address. There is one important matter—the burning topic of the day—to which I should now draw your attention—the question of the release of detenues and political prisoners. The recent hunger-strikes have brought this question to the forefront and have focussed public attention on it. I believe that I am voicing the feelings of at least the rank and file of the Congress when I say that everything humanly possible should be done to expedite release. So far as the Congress ministries are concerned, it would be well to note that the record of some of them has not come up to public expectation. The sooner they satisfy the public demand, the better it will be for the Congress.

and for the people who are suffering in Provinces ruled by non-Congress ministries. It is not necessary for me to labour this point and I fervently hope that in the immediate future, the public will have nothing to complain of so far as the record of the Congress ministries on this point is concerned.

It is not only the detenues and political prisoners in jail and detention who have their tale of woe. The lot of those who have been released is sometimes no better. They often return home in shattered health, victims of fell diseases like tuberculosis. Grim starvation stares them in the face and they are greeted, not with the smiles but with the tears of near and dear ones. Have we no duty to those who have given of their best in the service of their country and have received nothing but poverty and sorrow in return? Let us, therefore, send our heart-felt sympathy to all those who have suffered for the crime of loving their country and let us all contribute our humble mite towards the alleviation of their misery.

Friends, one word more and I have done. We are faced with a serious situation today. Inside the Congress there are differences between the right and the left which it would be futile to ignore. Outside, there is the challenge of British Imperialism which we are called upon to face. What shall we do in this crisis? Need I say that we have to stand foursquare against all the storms that may beset our path and be impervious to all the designs that our rulers may employ? The Congress today is the one supreme organ of mass struggle. It may have its right bloc and its left—but it is the common platform for all anti-imperialist organisations striving for Indian emancipation. Let us, therefore, rally the whole country under the banner of the Indian National Congress. I would appeal specially to the leftist groups in the country to pool all their strength and their resources for democratising the Congress and reorganising it on the broadest anti-imperialist basis. In making this appeal, I am greatly encouraged by the attitude of the leaders of the British Communist Party whose general policy with regard to India seems to me to be in keeping with that of the Indian National Congress.

In conclusion, I shall voice your feelings by saying that all India fervently hopes and prays that Mahatma Gandhi may be spared to our nation for many many years to come. India cannot afford to lose him and certainly not at this hour. We need him to keep our people united. We need him to keep our struggle free from bitterness and hatred. We need him for the cause of Indian Indepen-

dence. What is more—we need him for the cause of humanity. Ours is a struggle not only against British Imperialism but against world Imperialism as well, of which the former is the keystone. We are, therefore, fighting not for the cause of India alone but of humanity as well. India freed means humanity saved.

*Bande Mataram*

# Report of a London Interview

## QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Report of an interview with R. Palme Dutt, published in the *Daily Worker*, London, January 24, 1938.

*Question:* National Government spokesmen here claim that the new Constitution in India is a great success, and that the acceptance of office by the Congress is proof of this. What is the opinion of the National Congress on this view?

*Answer:* The acceptance of office is no proof that the Congress is going to work the Constitution for all time. The Congress Party has gone into office with considerable misgiving.

Its object in doing so is two-fold: firstly, to consolidate its own position; and secondly, to demonstrate that within the conditions of the present Constitution it is not possible to achieve anything really big or substantial. If contrary to its apprehension something substantial is achieved, then that will strengthen the political organisation of the people in their struggle for freedom.

*Question:* Is there any likelihood of the Congress accepting the Federal part of the Constitution?

*Answer:* There is no possibility of the Congress changing its mind and agreeing to work the Federal part of the Constitution, as it did in the case of the Provinces. There is no analogy between the Provincial part and the Federal part of the Constitution.

*Question:* What in your view is the next stage of the national struggle? Is it true that there is rapid development of peasant unrest and of the strike movement?

*Answer:* The next stage of the national struggle will be a further growth of mass consciousness at an increasing tempo. The problem for the Congress will be to mobilise this strength and direct it along the right lines.

In other words, the problem will be to build up the Party organisation on a broad anti-imperialist front. If we can do that, we

shall be prepared to face with hope and courage any crisis that the future may have in store for us. Peasant unrest and labour strikes are an expression of the further growth of mass consciousness since the Congress Party took office.

*Question:* Are you in favour of broadening further the mass basis of the National Congress as an all-inclusive national front by this collective affiliation of labour and peasant organisations?

*Answer:* Yes, definitely.

*Question:* What policy would you like to see the British Labour Party or a future Labour Government adopt in relation to India?

*Answer:* We would like the British Labour Party to stand for the Congress objective in its entirety.

*Question:* Many questions have been asked about the references to Fascism in the closing part of your book *The Indian Struggle*. Would you care to make any comment on your view of Fascism?

Many questions have also been asked about your criticisms of Communism in the same section. Would you care to make any comment on this?

*Answer:* My political ideas have developed further since I wrote my book three years ago.

What I really meant was that we in India wanted our national freedom, and having won it, we wanted to move in the direction of Socialism. This is what I meant when I referred to 'a synthesis between Communism and Fascism'. Perhaps the expression I used was not a happy one. But I should like to point out that when I was writing the book, Fascism had not started on its imperialist expedition, and it appeared to me merely an aggressive form of nationalism.

I should point out also that Communism as it appeared to be demonstrated by many of those who were supposed to stand for it in India seemed to me anti-national, and this impression was further strengthened in view of the hostile attitude which several among them exhibited towards the Indian National Congress. It is clear, however, that the position today has fundamentally altered.

I should add that I have always understood and am quite satisfied that Communism, as it has been expressed in the writings of Marx and Lenin and in the official statements of policy of the Communist International, gives full support to the struggle for national independence and recognises this as an integral part of its world outlook.

My personal view today is that the Indian National Congress

should be organised on the broadest anti-imperialist front, and should have the two-fold objective of winning political freedom and the establishment of a socialist regime.

# Municipal Socialism

Address to the Bombay Corporation, May 10, 1938.

MR. MAYOR, MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATION AND FRIENDS,

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the great honour you have done me this afternoon. I am not so presumptuous as to think that I am in any way worthy of this great honour. On the contrary, I feel I am before you here this afternoon, in spite of my own short-comings and limitations, as a symbol. I am here as a servant of the Indian National Congress and of the Indian public at large.

The very kind words which have fallen from your lips, Mr. Mayor, are a token of your generosity and the largeness of your heart. I take it that this generosity and largeness of heart show your real feelings towards the movement for Indian emancipation and towards all those who stand for that movement. We are living today in the midst of momentous times. You have referred also to international affairs. The day is gone when India was a country isolated from the rest of the world. Today, thanks to scientific achievement and to our own development, intellectual and moral, the whole world is one entity. What happens in one remote corner of the present world has far-reaching repercussions all over the globe. What we achieve in one city in India has, therefore, an importance not merely for that city, not merely for that country but, if I may say so, for the whole of humanity. This is true not only of political affairs but of civic affairs as well. I remember that during the few years that I had the occasion to spend in Europe, one of the most striking things which came to my notice was the achievement of the Socialist Municipality of Vienna. I believe nobody, no matter to what nationality he belonged, nobody who had occasion to see some of the achievements of that Municipality went back without a conviction that here was an achievement of much importance and significance to all those human beings who were interested in civic welfare. The Vienna Municipality, in the course of twelve years, provided housing accommodation for at least 2,00,000 persons and this arrangement

for housing 2,00,000 persons was made without any additional taxation and without any loans. The entire charge was met from revenue and that revenue was collected by taxing amusements. We know that amusements are taxed in this country also but unfortunately the cities do not have the benefit of that taxation. What impressed me most, therefore, was the fact that so much could be achieved in one city without any additional taxation and without loans. That is why I was stressing the point that if you could achieve something in one city, that would have significance and importance for the whole world.

It is exceedingly gratifying to note that in Bombay you have done away with limited franchise, that you are going to have adult franchise and that you have done away with nominations. Once again I will say that this has significance not only for the city of Bombay but for the whole of India and probably for other countries circumstanced like India. I think we should offer our congratulations to the present Government of Bombay for this change. We all wish that other cities, particularly the premier cities in India, would take a leaf out of Bombay's history in this respect, introduce adult franchise and abolish the system of nominations.

Now, Sir, the city of Bombay has a splendid situation surrounded by the sea. It is situated in the midst of fine natural scenery and the streets and buildings of Bombay—at least the better and richer parts of Bombay—can compare favourably with any city in this world; but that is only one side of the picture. We cannot forget the poverty which we have in this city and the slums in which our poorer countrymen have to live. We have, therefore, to address ourselves to the task of looking after the poorer and less fortunate sections of our countrymen. One of the greatest sons of India, Deshbandhu C. R. Das, once said that the ideal of civic bodies should be to make them poor men's Corporations and in his first speech as the Mayor of Calcutta he laid down a programme of service to the poor. That programme was in many ways an ideal programme and has afforded an inspiration to the Corporation of Calcutta and indirectly to other civic bodies as well. I think we have yet to travel a long way before we can honestly claim that our civic bodies are in reality poor men's Corporations. There is a great deal of work to be done but what is needed most is inspiration, zeal and passion to serve the poor. It is that zeal, that passion which is the motive power that will enable us to travel along the



path of service and to convert our cities into poor men's Corporations. Sir, here in Bombay you have achieved much, specially, in the field of primary education. Your achievements in the sphere of education as also in other spheres have been of immense benefit to the citizens of Bombay and afforded an inspiration to others who have been entrusted with civic government elsewhere. I do hope that you will not rest content with what you have already done but that you will move with the times and travel fast in the direction of making your Municipal Corporation an ideal one.

Civic progress all over the world is moving in the direction of what may be called Municipal Socialism. "Socialism" is a word which is sometimes a bogey to many, but I believe if we analyse and try to understand what socialism really stands for, and particularly what Municipal Socialism stands for, we shall have no reason to fight shy of it. Consciously or unconsciously we have been moving in the direction of Municipal Socialism. Today every modern Municipality has taken upon its shoulders immense duties which were unthinkable twenty or thirty years ago. The sphere of these social duties and responsibilities is, we may well say, fast expanding from day to day. Today a modern Municipality has to furnish not merely pure drinking water, roads, lighting, etc., but it has to provide primary education and it has to look after the health of the population and to tackle problems of infant mortality, maternity, drainage and the like problems which the Municipalities did not think of a few years ago. It is difficult to say where you are going to draw a line in future. You have in the case of the Birmingham Municipality a Municipal Bank and there are other Municipalities in the West which have taken upon their shoulders duties and responsibilities which were unheard of and unthinkable a few decades ago. That is why I say that we have been moving consciously or unconsciously in the direction of Municipal Socialism. Municipal Socialism is nothing else but a collective effort for the service of the entire community. With this ideal before us, if we address ourselves to the task that awaits us and fulfil our duties in the most satisfactory manner, we shall be serving not merely the cause of our cities but the cause of humanity as well. We, who are interested in civic affairs, take lessons not merely from the achievements of our own Municipalities but we travel abroad, in Europe and America and also in the Far East, read literature and collect information about municipal problems there, so that we may work

more efficiently and satisfactorily in our own cities. That is why I have stressed the point that your achievements here in Bombay are not only for your own fellow-citizens but have a much wider significance.

Apart from the opportunities which we get by joining civic bodies—opportunities of civic service—there is another positive gain which we can derive out of our association with them and that is this: our work in connection with these bodies equips us for the larger duties in public life. I think it was Bryce, one of the foremost political thinkers of England, who said that the real school of democracy is local self-government. Professor Laski and others have sung in the same tune. Today it is realised by all political thinkers and students of civic affairs that the real school of democracy is local self-government. Therefore, there is a double advantage which we derive from our association with local bodies.

One word more and I have done. We are frequently told by foreigners that municipal development, like other attempts at social progress in this country, have been the result of our contact with the West and that before we came into intimate touch with Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, very little had been achieved in the direction of civic progress. Sir, I should like to take this opportunity of giving the lie direct to this charge. In the sphere of municipal progress we are not creating something out of nothing, but we are building on ancient foundations. As in the sphere of village self-government we are building on very ancient foundations, so also in the sphere of local self-government we are doing the same. One has only to turn to the ancient relics of Mahenjodaro to realise what a high degree of civic achievement our forefathers in this ancient land could boast of. And after the age of Mahenjodaro if you come to the Mauryan Empire and study the records and descriptions of the capital of the Empire, viz., Pataliputra, you will find that the city of Pataliputra was not only a highly developed city but the municipal government of that city had varied functions, functions which can compare very favourably with those of any modern Municipality. For words like Mayor and other modern municipal terms you will find synonyms in our ancient language which were then in vogue. Then came what may be called the Dark Age in Indian history. During this Dark Age there was a set-back not only in municipal progress but in other departments of national life as well. But because of the Dark Age one should

not conclude that prior to that, we had not achieved any progress in civic affairs. It is necessary to remind our countrymen about this, because unfortunately as a result of our agelong servitude we have to a large extent forgotten our own past. It is only on account of the researches, past and present, made by our own scholars and historians that have unravelled to us our own forgotten past, that we can now realise what progress our forefathers had once made in the domain of civic affairs. Therefore, we can claim that in the matter of civic progress we are building on ancient foundations. That I think will give us inspiration in addressing ourselves to the problems of the present and of the future.

Sir, I am afraid my reply which was meant to be a short one has developed into something like a sermon. I had no intention of sermonising. I had got up with the intention of primarily thanking you from the bottom of my heart for the very great honour you have done me—honour, which I take it, is meant for the Indian National Congress of which I am a humble servant. Let me express a fervent hope that your city will make progress from day to day in the domain of civic affairs and will set an example to other civic bodies in this country and abroad. I wish you, Sir, and the Corporation all success in the arduous task that awaits you at present and in the future. Once again I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

# Bose-Jinnah Correspondence

(May-December, 1938)

Note handed over by the Congress President to Mr. M. A. Jinnah on May 14, 1938.

## *Confidential*

In the course of the talks between the Congress President and Mr. Jinnah, President of the All-India Muslim League, Mr. Jinnah suggested that any agreement that might be arrived at should be based on a clear understanding of the position of the Congress and of the Muslim League. He proposed that the conversation should proceed on the following lines:

The All-India Muslim League as the authoritative and representative organisation of the Indian Muslims and the Congress as the authoritative and representative organisation of the solid body of Hindu opinion have hereby agreed to the following terms by way of a pact between the two major communities and as a settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question.

After further consideration a somewhat different wording was suggested by him as follows:

The Congress and the All-India Muslim League as the authoritative and representative organisation of the Mussalmans of India have hereby agreed to the following terms of a Hindu-Muslim settlement by way of a pact.

This second statement, though shorter, apparently embodies the same idea which is given in the first—that is, that the Congress should represent the Hindus and the Muslim League the Mussalmans.

The Congress cannot possibly consider itself and function as if it represented one community only even though that might be the majority community in India. Its doors must inevitably be open

to all communities and it must welcome all Indians who agree with its general policy and methods. It cannot accept the position of representing one community and thus itself becoming a communal organisation. At the same time the Congress is perfectly willing to confer and co-operate with other organisations which represent minority interests.

It is obvious that the Mussalmans of India, though a minority in the whole country; form a very considerable part of the population and their wishes and desires must be considered in any scheme affecting India. It is also true that the All-India Muslim League is an organisation representing a large body of Muslim opinion which must carry weight. It is for this reason that the Congress has endeavoured to understand the viewpoint of the League and to come to an understanding with it. The Congress, however, would be bound to consult other existing Muslim organisations which have co-operated with the Congress in the past. Further, in the event of other group or minority interests being involved, it will be necessary to consult representatives of such interests.

26, Marine Drive, Bombay,  
15th May, 1938

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

Last night I gave you a note explaining our position. You asked me what constructive proposals we had to make. I think the note is self-explanatory. Having made known the Congress reaction to your suggestion, according to us it remains now to proceed to the next stage, namely, appointment of respective committees which will jointly settle the terms of understanding.

Yours sincerely,  
SUBHAS C. BOSE

Little Gibbs Road,  
Malabar Hill, Bombay,  
16th May, 1938

Dear Mr. Bose,

I acknowledge the receipt of a note you handed over to me on behalf of the Congress on the 14th and also I beg to acknowledge

the receipt of your letter dated the 15th of May, 1938. The matter will be placed before the Executive Council and the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League at a meeting to be called in the first week of June and I will communicate to you the decision as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,  
M. A. JINNAH

*6th June, 1938*

Dear Mr. Bose,

I am enclosing herewith the unanimous opinion of the Executive Council of the All-India Muslim League as promised on the note given to me by you on behalf of the Congress on the 15th May, 1938.

Yours sincerely,  
M. A. JINNAH

#### RESOLUTION NO. 1

The Executive Council of the All-India Muslim League has considered the note handed by the President, Mr. Subhas C. Bose, on behalf of the Congress to Mr. Jinnah, the President of the All-India Muslim League, on the 14th May and his letter of the 15th May, 1938, and find that it is not possible for the All-India Muslim League to treat or negotiate with the Congress the question of Hindu-Muslim settlement except on the basis that the Muslim League is the authoritative and representative organisation of the Mussalmans of India.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 2

The Council have also considered the letter of Mr. Gandhi, dated the 22nd May, 1938, and are of opinion that it is not desirable to include any Muslim in the personnel of the proposed committee that may be appointed by the Congress.

CROSSROADS  
RESOLUTION NO. 3

The Executive Council wish to make it clear that it is the declared policy of the All-India Muslim League that all other minorities should have their rights and interests safeguarded so as to create a sense of security amongst them and win their confidence and the All-India Muslim League will consult the representatives of such minorities and any other interest as may be involved when necessary.

The following telegram sent by the Congress President to Mr. Jinnah on June 21, 1938

RETURNED YESTERDAY. RECEIVED LETTER. THANKS. REGRET DELAY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT—SUBHAS BOSE.

38/2, Elgin Road, Calcutta,  
June 27, 1938

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

Your letter of the 6th instant forwarding the resolutions of the Executive Council of the Muslim League reached Calcutta duly, but as I was on tour, I did not get them till my return on the 20th instant. I telegraphed to you the next day, acknowledging the receipt of your letter.

The Working Committee of the Congress will meet at Wardha on the 9th July. Your letter and the resolutions of the Muslim League will be placed before the Committee and I shall acquaint you with its decision as soon as possible thereafter. I had been to Wardha and have just returned from there.

With best regards.

Yours sincerely,  
SUBHAS C. BOSE

Wardha,  
25th July, 1938

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

The Working Committee has given all the attention it was possible

for it to give to the resolutions of the Council of the Muslim League which you were good enough to enclose with your letter of the 6th June, 1938. The first resolution of the League Council defines the status of the League. If it means that before we proceed to set up a machinery for considering the terms of settlement of the communal question, the Congress should recognise the status as defined in that resolution, there is an obvious difficulty. Though the resolution does not use the adjective "only", the language of the resolution means that the adjective is understood. Already the Working Committee has received warnings against recognising the exclusive status of the League. There are Muslim organisations which have been functioning independently of the Muslim League. Some of them are staunch supporters of the Congress. Moreover, there are individual Muslims who are Congressmen, some of whom exercise no inconsiderable influence in the country. Then there is the Frontier Province which is overwhelmingly Muslim and is solidly with the Congress. You will see that in the face of these known facts, it is not only impossible but improper for the Congress to make the admission, which the first resolution of the League Council apparently desires the Congress to make. It is suggested that status of organisations does not accrue to them by any defining of it. It comes through the service to which a particular organisation has dedicated itself. The Working Committee, therefore, hopes that the League Council will not ask the Congress to do the impossible. Is it not enough that the Congress is not only willing but eager to establish the friendliest relations with the League and come to an honourable understanding over the much vexed Hindu-Muslim question? At this stage it may perhaps be as well to state the Congress claim. Though it is admitted that the largest number of persons to be found on the numerous Congress registers are Hindus, the Congress has a fairly large number of Muslims and members of other communities professing different faiths. It has been an unbroken tradition with the Congress to represent all communities, all races and all classes to whom India is their home. From its inception it has often had distinguished Muslims as presidents and as general secretaries who enjoyed the confidence of the Congress and of the country. The Congress tradition is that although a Congressman does not cease to belong to the faith in which he is born and brought up, no one comes to the Congress by virtue of his faith. He is in-and-out of the Congress by virtue of his endorsement of the political principles and policy of



## CROSSROADS

the Congress. The Congress, therefore, is in no sense a communal organisation. In fact, it has always fought the communal spirit because it is detrimental to the growth of pure and undefiled nationalism.

But whilst the Congress makes the claim, and has sought, with more or less success, to live up to the claim, the Working Committee would be glad if your Council would come to an understanding with the Congress in order that we might achieve national solidarity and whole-heartedly work for realising our common destiny.

As to the second resolution of the Council, I am afraid that it is not possible for the Working Committee to conform to the desire expressed therein.

The third resolution, the Working Committee is unable to understand. So far as the Working Committee is concerned, the Muslim League is a purely communal organisation, in the sense that it seems to serve Muslim interests only and its membership too is open only to Muslims. The Working Committee also has all along understood that so far as the League is concerned, it desires, and rightly, a settlement with the Congress on the Hindu-Muslim question and not on questions affecting all minorities. So far as the Congress is concerned, if the other minorities have a grievance against the Congress, it is always ready to deal with them, as it is its bounden duty to do so being by its very constitution representative of all-India without distinction of caste or creed.

In view of the foregoing I hope that it will be possible for us to take up the next stage in our negotiations for reaching a settlement.

It is suggested that as the previous correspondence has already been published, it would be wise to take the public into confidence and publish the subsequent correspondence between us. If you are agreeable, these documents will be immediately released for publication.

Yours sincerely,  
S. C. BOSE

Malabar Hill, Bombay,  
August 2, 1938

Dear Mr. Bose,

I placed your letter, dated the 25th of July, 1938, before the

meeting of the Executive Council of the All-India Muslim League.

The Executive Council gave its earnest attention and careful consideration to the arguments which were urged in your letter for persuading it not to claim the status it has done in its resolution No. 1, already communicated to you.

I am desired to state that in defining the status the Council was not actuated by any motive of securing an admission, but had merely stated an accepted fact.

The Council is fully convinced that the Muslim League is the only authoritative and representative political organisation of the Mussalmans of India. This position was accepted when the Congress-League Pact was arrived at in 1916 at Lucknow and ever since till 1935 when Jinnah-Rajendra Prasad conversation took place, it has not been questioned. The All-India Muslim League, therefore, does not require any admission or recognition from the Congress nor did the resolution of the Executive Council at Bombay. But in view of the fact that the position—in fact the very existence—of the League had been questioned by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then President of the Congress, in one of his statements, wherein he asserted that there were only two parties in the country, viz., the British Government and the Congress, it was considered necessary by the Executive Council to inform the Congress of the basis on which the negotiations between the two organisations could proceed.

Besides the very fact that the Congress approached the Muslim League to enter into negotiations for a settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question, it presupposed the authoritative and representative character of the League and as such its right to come to an agreement on behalf of the Mussalmans of India.

The Council are aware of the fact that there is a Congress Coalition Government in N.W.F.P. and also that there are some Muslims in the Congress organisation in other Provinces. But the Council is of opinion that these Muslims in the Congress do not and cannot represent the Mussalmans of India for the simple reason that their number is very insignificant and that as members of the Congress they have disabled themselves from representing or speaking on behalf of the Muslim community. Were it not so, the whole claim of the Congress alleged in your letter regarding its national character would fall to the ground.

As regards "the other Muslim organisations" to which reference has been made in your letter, but whom you have not even named, the Council considers that it would have been more proper if no reference had been made to them. If they collectively or individually had been in a position to speak on behalf of the Mussalmans of India, the negotiations with the Muslim League, for a settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question would not have been initiated by the President of the Congress and Mr. Gandhi.

So far as the Muslim League is concerned, it is not aware that any Muslim political organisation has ever made a claim that it can speak or negotiate on behalf of the Muslims of India. It is, therefore, very much to be regretted that you should have referred to "other Muslim organisations" in this connection.

The Council is equally anxious to bring about a settlement of "the much vexed Hindu-Muslim question," and thus hasten the realisation of the common goal, but it is painful to find that suitable arguments are being introduced to cloud the issue and retard the progress of the negotiations.

In view of the facts stated above, the Council wishes to point out that it considers undesirable the inclusion of Mussalmans in the Committee that might be appointed by the Congress, because it would meet to solve and settle the Hindu-Muslim question and so in the very nature of the issue involved, they would not command the confidence of either Hindus or the Mussalmans and their position indeed would be most embarrassing. The Council, therefore, request you to consider the question in the light of the above negotiations.

With reference to the third resolution, it was the memorandum of the Conference referred to in your letter dated the 15th of May, 1938, in which mention of other minorities was made and the Muslim League expressed its willingness to consult them if and when it was necessary in consonance with its declared policy.

As regards your desire for the release of the correspondence, including this letter, for publication, the Council has no objection to your doing so.

Yours sincerely,  
M. A. JINNAH

38/2, *Elgin Road, Calcutta,*  
*August 16, 1938*

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

Many thanks for your letter of the 2nd August, 1938. I regret the delay in replying to it. As the issue is a very important one, I desire to place your letter before the Congress Working Committee at its next meeting in September. Thereafter you will hear from me again.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,  
SUBHAS C. BOSE

*Delhi,*  
*October 2, 1938*

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

Your letter of the 2nd August, 1938, has been placed before the Working Committee. After due deliberation, it has resolved to reply as follows:—

Though there are inaccuracies in your letter, no purpose will be served by dwelling on them. The substance of your letter seems to be that the League does not expect the Congress either implicitly or explicitly to acknowledge its status as the authoritative Muslim organisation of India. If this view is accepted by the League, I am authorised to state that the Working Committee will confer with the Committee that may be appointed by the League to draw up the terms of settlement. The Working Committee will be represented by at least five of its members at the sittings of the conference.

As the previous correspondence has already been released for publication, I am taking the liberty of issuing this to the press.

Yours sincerely,  
SUBHAS C. BOSE

*Karachi,*  
*October 9, 1938*

Dear Mr. Bose,

I am in receipt of your letter dated October 2, which was placed

before the Executive Council of the League. I am authorised to state in reply that the Executive Council regret very much that the Working Committee of the Congress should have entirely misread my letter of August 2, which was quite clear and did not require any elucidation or further interpretation. The Muslim League is still ready to proceed with negotiations for a settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question on the basis defined in my letter referred to above and would appoint its representatives to meet a committee that may be appointed by the Congress on the footing indicated by us in our three resolutions of June 5, already communicated to you.

Yours sincerely,  
M. A. JINNAH

The Working Committee of the Congress, during its deliberations in Wardha from the 11th to 16th December, 1938, considered Mr. Jinnah's letter dated October 9, 1938, and authorised the President to write to Mr. Jinnah in the following terms closing the correspondence:

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

The Working Committee have considered your letter of October 9, 1938, and regret the decision contained therein. Since the Committee do not find it possible to agree with the Council of the Muslim League as to the basis of the negotiation and since the Council insist that an agreement as to the basis is a *sine qua non* of any negotiations between the Congress and the League, the Working Committee regret that they are not in a position to do anything further in the direction of starting negotiations with the League with a view to arriving at a settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question.

I am sorry for the delay in replying to your letter but I did not want to say anything till the Working Committee met and considered the matter.

Since the previous correspondence has been published already, I am taking the liberty of issuing this to the press.

Yours sincerely,  
SUBHAS C. BOSE

# On the Federal Scheme

Netaji's first statement on the Federal Scheme produced strong reaction among members of the Congress Right-wing. The second statement was made in defence of his original stand on the question.

## I

July 9, 1938

There have been from time to time statements or insinuations in the British Press to the effect that some influential leaders of the Congress have been negotiating with the British Government over the Federal Scheme as envisaged in the Government of India Act. I believe that the last statement which I noticed was that of the *Manchester Guardian* to which I gave an immediate and emphatic denial. In the absence of any proof, I cannot and do not believe that any influential Congress leader has been negotiating with the British Government with a view to arriving at a compromise behind the back of the Congress.

I may add that there is no analogy between Provincial Autonomy and the Federal Scheme and the acceptance of office in the Provinces by the Congress should not be construed as a stepping-stone towards the acceptance of the Federal Scheme at the Centre. I have no doubt in my mind that any effort to foist the Federal Scheme on the Congress will inevitably fail. If unfortunately it succeeds, it will break the Congress, because I do not see how those who are conscientiously opposed to the Federal Scheme can take it lying down.

Personally I think that any weakness shown by the Congress or any section thereof during this fateful hour in India's history will amount to treachery of the first magnitude to the cause of India's freedom. We are in such a sound strategic position today that if only we could unite and speak with one voice, we should be able to induce the British Government to concede the whole of our national demand. The slightest weakness in our attitude towards

the Federal Scheme is bound to weaken our hands and strengthen those of the British Government.

So far as I am concerned, should the unthinkable contingency arise of the Federal Scheme being adopted by a majority within the Congress, it would probably be my duty to relieve myself of the trammels of office so that I would be free to work for what I consider to be the best interests of the country, namely, open, unmitigated and unrelenting opposition to the monstrous Federal Scheme.

## II

*July 15, 1938*

It is neither my intention nor my duty to participate in a press controversy on this question. I have done what I felt it my duty to do, viz., to call public attention to the attitude of the Congress towards the Federal Scheme embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935. The statement I issued on the 9th July was nothing more than a forceful reiteration of the Congress view on Federation. That view was clearly expounded by the All-India Congress Committee in October, 1937, and it was subsequently re-affirmed by the Haripura Congress in February last.

The resolution of the All-India Congress Committee was as follows:

The All-India Congress Committee reiterate their emphatic condemnation of and complete opposition to the scheme and their decision to combat it in every possible way open to them. An attempt to inaugurate this scheme, despite the clearly expressed will of the nation, will be a challenge to the people of India. The Committee therefore call upon the provincial and local congress committees and the people generally, as well as the Provincial Governments and Ministries, to prevent the imposition of this Federation which will do grave injury to India and tighten the bonds which hold her in subjection to imperialist domination and reaction. The Committee are of opinion that the Provincial Governments should also move their legislatures to give formal expression to this opposition to the proposed Federation and to intimate the British Government not to impose it on their provinces.

The Congress therefore reiterates its condemnation of the proposed Federal Scheme and calls upon the provincial and local congress committees and the people generally, as well as the Provincial Governments and Ministries, to prevent its inauguration. In the event of an attempt being made to impose it, despite the declared will of the people, such an attempt must be combated in every way, and the Provincial Governments and Ministries must refuse to co-operate with it. In case such a contingency arises, the All-India Congress is authorised and directed to determine the line of action to be pursued in this regard.

Before I issued my statement on the 9th July, reports had reached me of efforts being made by the British Government to enlist the sympathy and support of Congressmen in favour of the Federal Scheme. It was therefore my duty to take the earliest opportunity of combating this sinister move in obedience to the mandate of the Haripura Congress. If I had not done that, I would have failed in the proper discharge of the responsibilities of my office.

I can legitimately claim that my statement emanated from a sense of implicit loyalty to the resolution of the Haripura Congress. If I used strong language it was partly because I feel strongly on the question and partly because the attitude of the Congress itself is a strong one, viz., an attitude of "emphatic condemnation" of and "complete opposition" to the Federal Scheme. Let me make it quite clear that the Congress resolution which was adopted unanimously at Haripura leaves no room for equivocation and it is not open to any Congressman, however highly placed he may be, to endeavour to weaken the bold and uncompromising position of the Congress on this issue. Nothing has happened since the Haripura Congress met which can induce us to modify our attitude towards Federation in the slightest degree.

On the contrary, the international situation has developed in such a favourable direction that it is all the more incumbent on us to maintain the stand we took at Haripura.

If there was any doubt as to the necessity of issuing such a statement, the developments subsequent to its publication should remove it once for all. And if we hold ourselves in patience for a time, I believe we shall soon be convinced that my statement was issued not a day too soon.

With regard to the probable consequences of an attempt to force



the Federal Scheme down our throats, though it is inconceivable that the Congress will ever repudiate its previous attitude, it is well for everybody concerned to anticipate what will happen if that unthinkable contingency does arise by some chance. Judging from the present temper of the Congress, there can be no doubt whatsoever that acceptance of the Federal Scheme by a majority in the Congress will inevitably cause a serious split within that body. If we are practical politicians, we shall not shut our eyes to the actualities of the situation and we shall not delude ourselves with the hope that the acceptance of the Federal Scheme by a majority will be meekly tolerated by the dissentient minority.

I am surprised and pained at some of the criticisms made of my statement. It is absurd to label as a threat what is nothing more than a forceful exposition of the Congress view on Federation. It is equally absurd to allege that I shall walk out of the Congress if that body goes back on its previous attitude. Nothing will ever make me give up the Congress which is like the very breath of my life. The last and equally absurd criticism made of my statement is that I have not got the liberty to resign even if I find the majority bent on taking a step which amounts to national "harakiri." Acceptance of the Federal Scheme by the Congress will amount to nothing short of political suicide and if the unthinkable contingency arises that the majority decide to go in for it, who can reasonably expect me to join in that game of suicide? In conclusion, I hope and trust and pray that all attempts on the part of Congressmen to whittle down our national demand will cease once for all. Let us not reduce ourselves to the level of parliamentary busybodies by offering Delhi and Whitehall amendments of the unwanted Federal Scheme. On the contrary, let us sink our differences and present a united front to the British Government and let us be firm in our conviction that British Imperialism can no longer ignore the national demand of a united and renascent India.

## Science and Politics

The Indian Science News Association invited Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the then President of the Congress, to preside over the third general meeting of the Association on August 21, 1938. Professor Meghnad Saha put certain questions to Netaji at the meeting. Here are the relevant proceedings.

*Question:* May I enquire whether the India of the future is going to revive the philosophy of village life, of the bullock-cart—thereby perpetuating servitude, or is she going to be a modern industrialised nation which, having developed all her natural resources, will solve the problems of poverty, ignorance and defence and will take an honoured place in the comity of nations and begin a new cycle in civilisation?

If the Congress High Command decides on a policy of industrialisation, are they going to set up a rationalised scheme of industrialisation and establish a National Research Council and mobilise the scientific intelligentsia of the country? I put the question because the Congress has come into power in several Provinces and because there is a great confusion of ideas regarding the future industrialisation of India.

*Answer:* The movement for Indian emancipation has reached a stage when Swaraj is no longer a dream—no longer an ideal to be attained in the distant future. On the contrary, we are within sight of power—seven out of eleven Provinces of British India are now under Congress ministries. Limited though the powers of those governments are, they have yet to handle the problems of reconstruction within their respective domains. How are we to solve these problems? We want, first and foremost, the aid of science in this task.

The Congress and the task of National Reconstruction: I have always held the view and I said so in my presidential speech at the Haripura Congress that the party that fights for freedom cannot liquidate itself when power is won. That party should face the tasks of post-war reconstruction as well. Hence, Congressmen of today have not only to strive for liberty, but they have also to devote a

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portion of their thought and energy to problems of national reconstruction. And national reconstruction will be possible only with the aid of science and our scientists.

May I now, with your permission, place before you some of my ideas on the problems of national reconstruction? We hear very often nowadays of schemes for bringing about industrial recovery in this land. An officer in this Province recently wrote a voluminous book on a recovery plan for Bengal. The problem we have to face is not industrial recovery, however, but industrialisation. India is still in the pre-industrial stage of evolution. No industrial advancement is possible until we first pass through the throes of an industrial revolution. Whether we like it or not, we have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that the present epoch is the industrial epoch in modern history. There is no escape from the industrial revolution. We can at best determine whether this revolution, that is industrialisation, will be a comparatively gradual one, as in Great Britain, or a forced march as in Soviet Russia. I am afraid that it has to be a forced march in this country.

I have no doubt that when we have a national government for the whole country, one of the first things we shall have to do is to appoint a National Planning Commission for the whole country. As a matter of fact our ministries in the seven provinces have already been feeling the need of a uniform industrial policy and programme. Anticipating this, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution a year ago, soon after the Congress ministries came into existence, to the effect that it was necessary to appoint a committee of experts to advise the Congress Governments on industrial matters. This view was confirmed by the Congress Premiers' Conference which met in May, 1938, in Bombay under my Chairmanship. Thereafter, the appointment of the committee of experts has been before the Working Committee and at its last meeting in July, the Working Committee decided that as a preliminary step, I shall convene a conference of the Industries Ministers of seven Congress-administered Provinces. I am stating all these facts to show that without waiting for the advent of Purna Swaraj, we are moving in the direction of economic planning.

Though I do not rule out cottage industries and though I hold that every attempt should be made to preserve and also revive cottage industries wherever possible, I maintain that economic planning for India should mean largely planning for the industrial-

isation of India. And industrialisation, as you will all agree, does not mean the promotion of industries for manufacturing umbrella-handles and bell-metal plates, as Sir John Anderson would have us believe.

I gratefully recognise the fact that your magazine *Science and Culture* has helped to direct intelligent thoughts in this country towards the problems of industrialisation. The articles published periodically on Electric Power Supply, Flood-control, River-physics, need of establishing a National Research Council, etc., have been highly illuminating and instructive.

I should now like to make a few observations on the principles of national planning:

- (1) Though from the industrial point of view the world is one unit, we should nevertheless aim at national autonomy, especially in the field of our principal needs and requirements.
- (2) We should adopt a policy aiming at the growth and development of the mother industries, viz., power supply, metal production, machine and tools manufacture, manufacture of essential chemicals, transport and communication industries, etc.
- (3) We should also tackle the problem of technical education and technical research. So far as technical education is concerned, as in the case of Japanese students, our students should be sent abroad for training in accordance with a clear and definite plan so that as soon as they return home, they may proceed straightaway to build up new industries.

So far as technical research is concerned, we shall all agree that it should be free from governmental control of every kind. It is only in this unfortunate country that government servants are entrusted with scientific research on receipt of princely salaries and we know very well what results have been obtained therefrom.

- (4) There should be a permanent National Research Council.
- (5) Lastly, as a preliminary step towards national planning, there should be an economic survey of the present industrial position with a view to securing the necessary data for the National Planning Commission.

These are, in brief, some of my ideas on the problems of industrialisation and national reconstruction and I believe they are held

in common by scientific men and women in this country. We, who are practical politicians, need your help, who are scientists, in the shape of ideas. We can, in our turn, help to propagate these ideas and when the citadel of power is finally captured, can help to translate these ideas into reality. What is wanted is far-reaching co-operation between Science and Politics.

Professor Saha has in the course of his illuminating address, asked me what the attitude of the Congress is towards the problems of industrialisation. I must say that all Congressmen do not hold the same view on this question. Nevertheless, I may say without any exaggeration that the rising generation are in favour of industrialisation and for several reasons. Firstly, industrialisation is necessary for solving the problem of unemployment. Though scientific agriculture will increase the production of the land, if food is to be given to every man and woman, a good portion of the population will have to be transferred from land to industry. Secondly, the rising generation are now thinking in terms of Socialism as the basis of national reconstruction and Socialism presupposes industrialisation. Thirdly, industrialisation is necessary if we have to compete with foreign industries.

Lastly, industrialisation is necessary for improving the standard of living of the people at large.

Professor Saha has asked another question, viz., whether India will be one nation when she is freed from British control. To this I may reply that we of the Congress are conscious of our responsibility in the matter of achieving Indian unity and solidarity. We want to go not the way of China, but the way of Turkey. But we shall have to work very hard indeed, if we want to hold together as one nation when we are free. For promoting national unity and solidarity, many things are needed, viz., a common lingua franca, a common dress, a common diet, etc. The Congress, as you are aware, has been advocating Hindusthani as the lingua franca of this country. But I believe that what is wanted most of all is the will to be one nation and to hold together as one nation, when foreign domination ceases. Thus, to my mind, the problem of unity is largely a psychological problem. The people must be educated and drilled to feel that they are one nation. Other factors, like language, dress, food, etc., may help unity, but cannot create it. In addition to this national will, what is needed for maintaining national unity and solidarity is an all-India party. That party is

the Congress. We find in history that each country has produced a party for the purpose of unifying the people of that country. The Communist Party in Russia, the Nazi Party in Germany, the Fascist Party in Italy and Kemal's Party in Turkey are instances in point. The Congress Party in India will play the unifying role which the above parties have played in their respective countries.

## The Pros and Cons of Office Acceptance

Signed article in the *Modern Review*, August, 1938.

Now that the Supreme Executive of the Indian National Congress has decided to permit members of the Congress to accept ministerial office in those provinces where the Congress Party is in a majority, it behoves us to be alert about the dangers ahead of us. Though there are going to be Congress Ministries in only six out of the eleven provinces in British India (viz., in the United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, Madras Presidency, Central Provinces and Bombay Presidency), there is no doubt that the attention of Congressmen throughout India and of the public in general, will, for some time to come, be riveted on the work of the Ministers and of the Provincial Legislatures. Constitutional activity will become the order of the day and extra-constitutional methods like civil disobedience, which have hitherto been the main political weapon in the hands of the Congress, will be relegated to the background. A psychological change in the mentality of the people will necessarily follow and a desire for the loaves and fishes of office will creep into the minds of many Congressmen. The "rebel-mentality" which it has taken the Congress years to foster, will once again give place to self-complacency and inertia. These are some of the possibilities that are looming large today.

I am not one of those who consider that acceptance of ministerial office is wrong in principle. Entry into the Legislatures and acceptance of office no doubt involve taking the oath of allegiance to the British Crown. But I have always regarded such oaths as purely constitutional in character. Between 1922 and 1925, when the question of entry into the Legislatures was being hotly debated in Congress circles, the argument of the oppositionists that such entry necessarily implied swearing allegiance to the Crown never appealed to me. I see nothing ethically wrong in Mr. de Valera's taking the oath of allegiance to the British Crown in order to go into the Dail

and abolish that oath. The issues involved are not those of principle but of expediency and the standpoint from which I judge such issues is entirely realistic.

From my own experience of municipal administration I feel sure that success in the administrative sphere demands a capacity for mastering infinite details. Whole-hearted devotion to administrative work, therefore, rarely leaves one any spare time or energy for tackling broader issues. It is only seldom that we do come across men who can go into the minutest details of administration and simultaneously think out the more fundamental problems. I remember very clearly that when I was the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation in 1924, I was entirely lost to the Congress, so submerged was I in the details of municipal administration. But I had gone into this work with my eyes open, because I had the assurance that there was no dearth of men to carry on Congress activities with unabated vigour.

I have always held the view that those who fight for freedom have to undertake the task of "post-war" reconstruction when freedom is won. There can be no shirking of responsibility on the pretext, "our mission is over". Therefore, as soon as a political party is victorious, it has to throw itself heart and soul into the task of administration and social reconstruction and thereby demonstrate that it can create as effectively as it can destroy. But before the party can undertake that responsibility, it has to decide if the longed-for hour has arrived and freedom's battle has been won. Coming to the issue in hand, the question which confronts us is—"Does the Government of India Act, 1935, give what we have striven for? And leaving out the Central Government for the time being, does it even give us real autonomy in the Provinces?" The obvious reply is—"No".

It will, of course, be argued that, in political as in military warfare, we have to occupy every vantage-point and consolidate our position, as we proceed towards our goal. Very true. But are we sure that in trying to capture the seats of power, for what they are worth, we shall not get lost in the labyrinth of administration and begin to renounce that "rebel mentality" which is the starting point of all political progress? The Congress today is clearly in the presence of a dilemma. In order to continue the fight for freedom which is less than half won, it cannot afford to let all its front-rank men go into ministerial office. On the other hand, unless really first-rate



men become Congress ministers in the different Provinces, we shall fail to make the fullest use of the seats of influence and power which the Constitution gives us. It was only a first-rate political genius like the late V. J. Patel who, as President of the Indian Legislative Assembly during the period 1925-30, could uphold the popular cause, create a parliamentary tradition and keep the members of the Treasury Benches in their places. A lesser man would certainly have failed. And placed alongside of V. J. Patel, Shanmukham Chettys and Abdur Rahims appear like negligible invertebrates.

It can or will be also urged by the protagonists of office acceptance that experience in administration is indispensable for a political party and that the new Constitution offers scope for acquiring such experience. But this argument may easily be overdone. Experience in administration is the same as experience in organisation and while the latter may be an asset for any party the former may be more of a handicap than otherwise. The greatest administrators in post-war Europe, as in all ages and in all climes, were comparatively young and also inexperienced in administration, when they took over the reins of office from their predecessors. One has only to look at successful administrators like Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini and Kemal Pasha to appreciate the force of my argument. The fact is that after a revolution (whether violent or non-violent) the new administration requires principles and technique of quite a different order and in order to cope with the new situation successfully, courage, imagination and resourcefulness. Did "experienced" administrators produce the Five-Year Plan for Soviet Russia or build up a new Republic for the Turks or found a new Empire for Italy or create a new Persia out of chaos and corruption?

There is no doubt that the central citadel of power and reaction (the Government of India) is still in the hands of the British Government and it is only the outposts, the Provincial Governments, that have passed into our hands—and that too, not wholly. In such circumstances, can we continue our fight for full freedom without being side-tracked from the main issues and without losing much of our pristine zeal, if an important section within our party choose to bury themselves in the details of administration? An *a priori* answer to this question is not of much value and events alone will furnish us the proper reply in the fulness of time. But if the faith of the pro-office party is to be justified, we have to be forewarned and forearmed against the disasters which are likely to overtake us in

the near future and to which reference has been made in the first paragraph. My object to-day is to not reopen a question that has been decided once for all by the Supreme Executive of the Congress, but to indicate some of the rocks of which we have to steer clear, if we intend to further the cause of India's independence while making the most of the new constitution.

The big problems which an Indian statesman will have to tackle are poverty, unemployment, disease and illiteracy. These problems can be successfully solved only by a national government with plentiful resources at its command. Once we have the will to handle these problems, we shall require the organisation and the money to do so. Will the Congress Ministers in the provinces find the necessary organisation and money to undertake nation-building work on a large-scale? Regarding organisation, it may be pointed out that the superior services are manned largely by the British who have been brought up under a totally different tradition and who will always be conscious that their pay, emoluments and pension are safeguarded in the Constitution beyond the control of the Ministers. Will such officers fall in line with the new policy which Congress Ministers will necessarily enunciate? If they do not, then what will be the fate of the Ministers? With the best of intentions, will they be able to struggle successfully against an obstructionist bureaucracy? It will be quite impossible for them to alter the personnel of the higher services because the latter constitute a "reserved" subject which the Ministers cannot touch. The Ministers will, therefore, have to carry on with them as best as they can, though they may run the risk of seeing their work nullified through their obstructionist policy. Further, several of the provinces will present us with the paradoxical situation of a Congress Government being run largely by British officers and their erstwhile protégés.

The problem of finance is a problem even more formidable. The Congress Party is committed to certain measures which will cut at the sources of governmental revenue and will make it extremely difficult to launch on nation-building work on a large scale. After a reduction in land-rent and the introduction of a prohibitionist policy with regard to excise, the Ministry may even have to face a budget deficit. In any other country, the Finance Minister would at once set about reducing expenditure. In the Indian provinces, the salary and emoluments of the higher services cannot be touched and the other ranks are generally too ill-paid to leave any room for

economy. Consequently, retrenchment in this sphere will be out of the question. Army, Railways, Posts and Telegraphs, Customs, etc., being federal subjects, retrenchment in, or increase of income from, any of these departments will not be possible either. None of the provincial Governments can create more money through inflation—which is easily possible in view of the large gold reserve which India has—because currency is also a federal subject. In these circumstances, the only alternative open to a Provincial Government will be to float a big loan for financing nation-building activities. But will the Governor recommend such a loan for the approval of the Provincial Legislative Assembly and will the reactionary Central Government of Lord Linlithgow sanction such a loan, where such sanction is called for under the constitution? If this is not done, then blank despair is likely to stare the Congress Ministers in the face..

In the light of the above considerations, let us see what tangible good the Congress Ministers can achieve. Firstly, they can release the political prisoners, repeal the repressive laws and ordinances and allow the people to have more freedom. Secondly, they can infuse a new spirit into the provincial administration and set up a new standard of public service for all classes of Government servants and especially the police. Thereby, they may be able to get more work out of the existing officers and employees of the Government and improve the standard of administration. Thirdly, they can give a fillip to the constructive activities of the Congress by offering governmental co-operation wherever possible. Fourthly, they can give an impetus to indigenous industries and especially to Khadi (handspun and handwoven cloth) by preferring home-made goods to imported stuff when government stores have to be purchased. Fifthly, they can initiate beneficial legislation in several matters (e.g., social welfare, public health, etc.), especially where such legislation does not entail additional expenditure. Sixthly, by a careful distribution of patronage, they can strengthen the nationalist elements in the provinces and incidentally weaken the reactionary forces. Seventhly, they can undertake a comprehensive economic survey of the provinces with a view to ascertaining the wealth of people, their taxable capacity and the extent of unemployment. Eighthly, they may effect a certain amount of retrenchment in some departments. Ninthly, they can utilise their official position for thwarting the introduction of Federation at the centre. Last but not the least, through their example

they may exert a wholesome influence on non-Congress ministries in the five other provinces.

But these are, after all, piecemeal reforms. They may satisfy the people for a time, but not for long. Before the first year is out, the basic problems—poverty, unemployment, disease, illiteracy, etc., will once again assume serious proportions and demand an urgent remedy. With a reactionary Government at the Centre and with limited provincial finances, will the Congress Ministries be able to cope with the demand? Poverty and unemployment can be tackled only by an improvement of agriculture and a revival of national industries, along with a rapid extension of banking and credit facilities. All this will require more money. For the eradication of disease, large sums of money will be needed in connection with preventive and curative measures on the one hand, and the promotion of sports and physical culture on the other. And the abolition of illiteracy will pre-suppose the introduction of free and compulsory primary education for young and old, which will be possible only when large funds are at the disposal of the ministers.

These fundamental problems, which have not yet been satisfactorily solved by the foremost nations of the day, can be successfully tackled in India only when there is a popular Government in power at Delhi and there is thorough co-operation between the Central and Provincial Governments. Further it is my firm conviction that the financial needs of a backward and impoverished country like India which has to make up leeway, can never be met by following the principles or conventions of orthodox finance. I can, therefore, visualise a time in the near future when the Congress Ministers, having gone through a substantial portion of their programme of piecemeal reform, will realise that no further progress is possible until a popular Government is installed at Delhi and there is complete transference of power to the people of the country.

But we need not think that it will be all smooth sailing for the Congress Ministers until we come to this stage. I have already hinted at two difficulties which will dog their footsteps throughout their official career, viz., paucity of finance and the prerogatives of the superior services. The first point does not need any labouring, but I should like to illustrate the second. Take one specific instance, the Indian Medical Service. Under the old scheme, there were 386 Britishers and 263 Indians in the Indian Medical Service. Under the new scheme, the number of Britishers will remain constant, but

the number of Indians will be reduced to 198 and out of this number, there will be 58 officers on Short Service Commission. The basic pay of the I.M.S. officers will be reduced in future, but the Britishers will be more than compensated by an increase in the overseas allowance, which by the way will be denied to Indian members of the Service. Thus under the new scheme, the position of Indian members of the I.M.S. *vis-à-vis* the British members, will be worse than what it is today. And to make matters still worse, some of the best districts in the country and some of the best jobs in the Medical Colleges will be reserved for Britishers. Though the Congress Ministers will not be responsible for this state of affairs and though well-informed and educated men will appreciate the helplessness of their position, the man on the street will not absolve the Provincial Government from all blame for its inability to push on with the Indianisation of the superior services or to reduce the exorbitant salaries and emoluments which they draw. The Congress Ministers in the six provinces will be in an anomalous position because, while they will nominally be the bosses of the I.M.S. officers they will not be able to touch a single prerogative belonging to the latter. The position of other branches of the superior services will be similar to that of the I.M.S.

If such be the prospect before the Congress ministries in the six provinces, one can easily imagine what the record of the ministries in the five other provinces will be, where the majority of the ministers are spineless creatures whose one ambition is somehow to remain in office. In Bengal, for instance, the achievements of the ministry, or rather the non-achievement during the last four months are an augury for the future. They have not yet had the courage to tackle the first item in the programme of any popular ministry, viz., the release of all political prisoners. What then can one expect of that ministry in the matter of handling the difficult jute problem of Bengal on the satisfactory solution of which depend the welfare and prosperity of at least thirty if not forty millions of people?

I remember that when I was in Dublin in February, 1936, I was discussing with the Ministers of Agriculture and Industry, somewhat similar problems, viz., the restriction of beet cultivation in the Irish Free State, its relation to the needs of the sugar-mill industry, and the marketing of the sugar produced in that country. And I then realised how easy it was to solve the jute problem in Bengal, if only one had a national and democratic government ruling at Calcutta and

at Delhi. I believe that a popular ministry in Bengal can achieve much even within the limits of the constitution in solving the jute problem, if it has the courage to fight the vested interests, though it will necessarily be handicapped where additional funds will be required for financing the jute growers. But, of course, nothing can come out of the present reactionary ministry, which is poor in talent and lacking in courage.

Are we to conclude then that nothing substantial can come out of the policy of accepting ministerial office? Certainly not. Though, unlike the majority of Congressmen today, I have no hopes of far-reaching reforms through the instrumentality of Congress ministries, I nevertheless believe that it is possible to utilise the policy of office acceptance to the fullest extent and advance the cause of Indian independence. But in order to accomplish that, we have to be wide awake and not allow the Congress to degenerate into a glorified Liberal League. There is no lack of people within the Congress who, left to themselves, would like to slide back into the more comfortable path of constitutionalism.

The greatest advantage accruing from office acceptance will be that it will inspire the masses with the belief that the Congress is the natural successor to the British Government, and that in the fullness of time the entire governmental machinery in India will pass into the hands of the Congress party. The moral gain resulting from this will be immeasurable, and I consider it far more valuable than any material gain which may fall to our lot through the grace of Congress Ministers. Secondly, for weak-minded Congressmen a taste of power may be a powerful incentive to further activity involving suffering and sacrifice and may engender greater self-confidence. Thirdly, it will enable the Congress to oppose the introduction of Federation, not only from without, but also through the medium of the Provincial Governments—and if as a result of this two-fold opposition, the Federal Plan is finally smashed, the Congress will have a feather in its cap.

Last but not least, through office acceptance, the Congress Ministers will be able to demonstrate to India and to the world from their own administrative experience that there is little scope for far-reaching social reconstruction within the limits of the Constitution of 1935. This experience will prepare the Congress and the country at large, psychologically, for the final assault on the citadel of reaction at Delhi and Whitehall.

Personally, I shall be more than satisfied if this fourfold result follows from office acceptance. Those of us who have no faith in office acceptance as a policy, but have to abide by it as a *fait accompli*, have to warn our countrymen against the talk of a ten-year programme for Congress ministries which has been started by some Congress leaders who may possibly be feeling inclined to accept constitutionalism as a settled policy for the future.

It is gratifying to see that the foremost leaders of the Congress—Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Babu Rajendra Prasad and others—have kept aloof not only from ministerial office, but also from the Legislature. This will be a guarantee that the Congress will not lose itself in the meshes of parliamentary activity and thereby sink into a purely constitutional body. (I am using the word “constitutional” in its narrow sense.) These leaders will see to it that the Congress Ministers are kept in their places and carry out the instructions of the Congress High Command. Above all, the fact that Mahatma Gandhi, in spite of his temporary retirement, is as vigilant as ever, watching events with the closest interest, will convince everyone that should the occasion arise, as in all probability it may, he will not hesitate to come out into the open once again and calling upon the Congress to discard Constitutional activity, will unfurl the flag of “Mass Satyagraha”, so that the Congress may fight its last battle for winning “Purna Swaraj” for India.

# *The Industrial Problems of India*

Full text of address delivered at the Industries Ministers' Conference in Delhi, October 2, 1938.

Let me at the outset thank you all heartily for responding to my invitation and attending this conference in spite of inconvenience and loss of time. This conference is the first of its kind since the Congress undertook the responsibility of government in the Provinces. Ever since it was decided to permit Congressmen to accept ministerial office, the problem of developing the industries of our country and the question of co-ordination of our resources with a view to that end has been engaging the earnest attention of the Working Committee.

At its sitting in August, 1937, the Working Committee adopted the following resolution:

The Working Committee recommends to the Congress Ministries the appointment of a Committee of Experts to consider urgent and vital problems, the solution of which is necessary to any scheme of national reconstruction and social planning. Such solution will require extensive surveys and the collection of data, as well as a clearly defined social objective. Many of these problems cannot be dealt with effectively on a provincial basis and the interests of the adjoining provinces are interlinked. Comprehensive river surveys are necessary for formulation of a policy to prevent disastrous floods, to utilize the water for purposes of irrigation, to consider the problem of soil erosion, to eradicate malaria, and for the development of hydro-electric and other schemes. For this purpose the whole river valley will have to be surveyed and investigated, and large-scale state planning resorted to. The development and control of industries require also joint and co-ordinated action on the part of several provinces. The Working Committee advises therefore that, to begin with, an inter-provincial Committee of Experts be appointed to consider the general nature of the problems to be faced, and to suggest how, and in what order,



these should be tackled. This Experts Committee may suggest the formation of special committees or boards to consider each such problem separately and to advise the provincial governments concerned as to the joint action to be undertaken.

In May last, I convened in Bombay a conference of the Premiers of the seven Congress Provinces which was attended by some members of the Working Committee and also by several Ministers. On that occasion, we discussed, as some of you will remember, the problems of industrial reconstruction, development of power resources and power supply as well as the general question of co-ordination and co-operation among the Congress Provinces. If I remember aright, those who attended the conference were of the view that the Working Committee should take the initiative in appointing a committee of experts to advise the Congress ministries on the above problems.

The Working Committee in July last adopted the following resolution:

With reference to the resolution passed by the Working Committee at Wardha on August 14-17, 1937, relating to the appointment of an Experts Committee to explore the possibilities of an All-India Industrial Plan, it is resolved that as a preliminary step the President be authorized to convene a conference of the Ministers of Industries at an early date and call for a report of the existing industries in different provinces and the needs and possibilities of new ones.

This Conference has been called in pursuance of this resolution.

It is needless for me to point out that with the problems of poverty and unemployment looming so large in our national life today, the question of utilising all our resources to the best advantage of the nation has assumed enormous importance. It is essential to improve the miserable lot of our peasantry and to raise the general standard of living. This cannot be achieved merely by the improvement of agriculture. Greater efficiency in agricultural methods, which is certainly desirable, may give us more and cheaper food and other necessities of life obtained from agriculture, but it will not solve the problem of poverty and unemployment. This may appear paradoxical but a little consideration will show that greater efficiency means

that the same production in agriculture can be effected by less than the present number of agriculturists. In that eventuality the present situation of unemployment may become worse as a result of scientific agriculture.

How then shall we tackle this formidable problem? It is our aim to see that everybody—man, woman and child, is better clothed, better educated and has sufficient leisure for recreation and for cultural activity. If this aim is to be realised the quantity of industrial products has to be increased considerably; necessary works have to be organised and a large proportion of village population have to be diverted to industrial occupations.

India is a country with resources similar to those of the United States of America. Her mineral wealth and other natural resources are superabundant. What is wanted is their systematic and organised exploitation by us in the best interests of the nation. Every country in the world that has grown rich and prosperous has done so through the fullest development of its industries. I shall here cite the example of only one country. Before the Great War, Russia was no better than India. She was mainly an agricultural country and nearly 70 per cent of the population were peasants, almost as miserable and wretched as our peasants today. Industries were in a backward state, power was undeveloped and was considered a luxury. She was without knowledge of her power resources, without experts and technicians. But within the last sixteen years she has passed from a community of primarily half-starved peasants to one of primarily well-fed and well-clothed industrial workers. She has achieved a considerable measure of success in her efforts to solve the problem of poverty, disease and famine which perpetually haunted her peasant population before the Revolution. This has been largely due to planned industrialisation of the whole country which presupposed a scheme of planned electrification. This marvellous progress in Russia in a very short period deserves our careful study and attention, irrespective of the political theories on which this State is based. I have quoted the example of Russia merely because of the resemblance which the pre-war conditions there bear to those in our country and to show how far a scheme of planned industrialisation can take us on the path to all-round prosperity.

We Congressmen of today have not only to strive for liberty but have also to devote a portion of our thought and energy to problem of national reconstruction, considering that we are within sight of

power and Swaraj is no longer a dream to be realized in the distant future. National reconstruction will be possible only with the aid of science and our scientists. There is at the present day a lot of loose talk about schemes for bringing about industrial recovery in this land. To my mind the principal problem that we have to face is not industrial recovery but industrialisation. India is still in the pre-industrial stage of evolution. No industrial advancement is possible until we pass through the throes of an industrial revolution. If the industrial revolution is an evil, it is a necessary evil. We can only try our best to mitigate the ills that have attended its advent in other countries. Furthermore, we have to determine whether this revolution will be a comparatively gradual one, as in Great Britain, or a forced march as in Soviet Russia. I am afraid that it has to be a forced march in this country. In the world as it is constituted today, a community which resists industrialisation has little chance of surviving international competition.

At this stage I should like to make it perfectly clear that there need not be a conflict between cottage industries and large-scale industries. Such conflict, if any, arises out of misunderstanding. I am a firm believer in the need of developing our cottage industries, though I also hold that we have to reconcile ourselves to industrialisation. We find that in the most industrially advanced countries of Europe a large number of cottage industries still exist and thrive. In our country we know of cottage industries—like the handloom industry for instance—which have withstood competition with Indian and foreign mills and have not lost ground. Industrialisation does not therefore mean that we turn our back on cottage industries. Far from it. It only means that we shall have to decide which industries should be developed on a cottage basis and which on a large-scale basis. In the peculiar national economy which exists in India today, and in view of the limited resources of our people, we should do our very best to develop cottage industries, side by side with large-scale industries.

Industries may be roughly classified under three heads—heavy, medium and cottage industries. Heavy industries at the present time are no doubt of the greatest value for the rapid economic development of the country. They form the backbone of our national economy. We cannot unfortunately make much headway in this direction until we capture power at the centre and secure full control of our fiscal policy. The medium scale industries can be started by

business leaders with Government co-operation and help. As regards cottage industries, I have already observed that there need not be any conflict between their development and that of large-scale industries.

I should now like to make a few observations on the principles of national planning:

- (a) Though from the industrial point of view the world is one unit, we should nevertheless aim at national autonomy especially in the field of our principal needs and requirements.
- (b) We should adopt a policy aiming at the growth and development of the mother industries, viz., power supply, metal production, machine and tools manufacture, manufacture of essential chemicals, transport and communication industries, etc.
- (c) We should also tackle the problem of technical education and technical research. So far as technical education is concerned, as in the case of Japanese students, our students should be sent abroad for training in accordance with a clear and definite plan so that as soon as they return home they may proceed straight-away to build up new industries. So far as technical research is concerned, we shall agree that it should be freed from governmental control of every kind.
- (d) There should be a permanent national research council.
- (e) Last but not the least, as a preliminary step towards national planning, there should be an economic survey of the present industrial position with a view to securing the necessary data for the national planning commission.

I shall now draw your attention to some of the problems which you may have to consider at this conference:

- (1) Arrangement for a proper economic survey of each Province.
- (2) Co-ordination between cottage industries and large-scale industries with a view to preventing overlapping.
- (3) The advisability of having regional distribution of industries.
- (4) Rules regarding technical training in India and abroad, for our students.
- (5) Provisions for technical research.
- (6) Advisability of appointing a committee of experts to give further advice on the problems of industrialisation.

If these problems could be tackled at this conference, I am sure that our purpose in meeting here this afternoon would be fulfilled. As I have indicated at the outset, we have to go into the question of the existing industries in the different Provinces and the needs and possibilities of new ones. We can fulfil this task only if we tackle a variety of problems some of which I have indicated above.

In conclusion, I express the ardent hope that through your help and co-operation the conference may prove to be a success and may afford a powerful impetus to the industrial regeneration of our poor and exploited country.

## *The Students' Movement*

Text of message to the U. P. Students' Conference held at Allahabad on October 29, 1938.

I have always had a close touch with the Students' Movements in India and for various reasons. My experiences as a student convinced me years ago that students must have an organisation of their own, if they want to exist as self-respecting individuals and prepare themselves for their future career as citizens of a great country. When I ceased to be a student in the narrow sense of the term, I resolved within myself that I would do my very best to lend a helping hand to the future generation of students if and when necessity arose.

Students all over the world, regardless of their national barriers, look upon themselves as a fraternity and rightly too. It is not a mere truism that the students of today are the leaders of tomorrow and that they are the living embodiment of a nation's hopes and aspirations. The students represent, as a rule, the most idealistic part of a nation and it is because of their innate idealism that the students of the world feel that they are members of one great fraternity. It should be our duty to foster this sense of solidarity among our students, so that through them, the Indian people may be welded into one nation for all time to come.

The students of a free country enjoy the rights which free men and free women usually enjoy but this is not the case with our students. Our students suffer from the handicaps which members of a subject race cannot avoid. They are looked upon as minors by their guardians, at home and outside; by the state, they are usually regarded as political suspects. (Things have improved since the Congress Governments came into existence.) In such circumstances, students must learn to help themselves. They must insist on being treated as grown-up men and women and demand those rights which members of a free nation are entitled to.

Not infrequently students come into conflict with the authorities, both educational and Government. Conflicts with the educational authorities usually arise when they are denied their rights as students

and with the government authorities when they are denied their rights as citizens. In either case, students can hope to vindicate themselves only when they are properly organised. Organisation, therefore, is their first and foremost task. Students' Conferences can be of lasting benefit only when they afford impetus. Organisation for vindicating students' rights is not, however, enough. Organisation should also aim at providing physical, intellectual and moral training so that students may, individually and collectively, turn out to be better men and better citizens.

I am most decidedly of opinion that the platform of the Students' Movement should be a broad-based one and should be open to students of all shades of opinion. It would be a disaster if students belonging to a particular party or group or ideology were to attempt to capture office to the exclusion of other students. If this happens, the Students' Movement will split and several students' federations will come into existence. In your deliberations, hold aloft your eyes to the ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity and progress and remember always that liberty means emancipation from bondage of every kind—political, social and economic.

# Our Needs and Our Duties

Full text of a signed article in the *National Front*, October, 1938.

If we analyse the secret of the influence and strength of the Indian National Congress to-day, we come down to three factors:

- (1) the large membership of the Congress,
- (2) the organisation and discipline of the Congress, and
- (3) the spirit of service and sacrifice demonstrated by Congressmen during the last fifty three years.

Since its birth in 1885, the Congress has made considerable headway and has brought the Indian people nearer to their goal of Swaraj or Independence. But though we are within sight of power, there is yet a struggle ahead of us. If we desire that this struggle should be the last hurdle in our march towards freedom, we have to do three things. The membership of the Congress should be so enlarged as to embrace the vast majority of our countrymen. Our organisation and discipline have to be perfected and last, but not least, we have to be prepared for greater suffering and sacrifice.

In this short article, I desire to deal mainly with the first of the above three requisites.

In a political organisation which uses the method of non-violence, as opposed to armed struggle, the question of numbers assumes great importance. The ultimate weapon in a non-violent struggle is Satyagraha or mass civil disobedience which presupposes the rallying of the masses under one banner. In proportion as the Congress has been able to draw the masses to its fold, it has increased its influence and strength.

When the first session of the Congress was held in Bombay in 1885, only a handful of middle and upper class intellectuals assembled on the occasion. To-day a session of the Congress can draw as many people as it can accommodate.

There is no doubt that Mahatma Gandhi was the first leader to bring the Congress into intimate contact with the masses of this



increasing international tension and the prospective fight over Federation the new year will be a momentous one in our national history. Owing to this and other reasons, if my services in office are demanded by the majority of the delegates with what justification can I withdraw from the contest when the issue involved is not a personal one at all? If, however, as a result of the appeal made by eminent leaders like Maulana Azad the majority of the delegates vote against my re-election I shall loyally abide by their verdict and shall continue to serve the Congress and the country as an ordinary soldier. In view of all these considerations I am constrained to feel that I have no right to retire from the contest. I am, therefore, placing myself unreservedly in the hands of my fellow delegates and I shall abide by their decision.

*Telegrams exchanged between Vallabhbhai Patel and Sarat Chandra Bose, members of the Congress Working Committee, on the 24th January, 1939:*

(1) From Patel to Bose:

FEEL SUBHAS BABU'S STATEMENT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION NEEDS COUNTER STATEMENT FROM MEMBERS WORKING COMMITTEE WHO FEEL RE-ELECTION THIS YEAR UNNECESSARY. BRIEF STATEMENT READY. IT SAYS RE-ELECTION ONLY EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES. NO SUCH PRESENT FOR RE-ELECTING SUBHAS BABU. IT REBUTS SUBHAS BABU'S CONTENTION ABOUT FEDERATION, ETC., AND SAYS PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES FIXED NOT BY PRESIDENT BUT CONGRESS OR WORKING COMMITTEE. COUNTER STATEMENT COMMENDS DR. PATTABHI FOR ELECTION AND APPEALS SUBHAS BABU NOT DIVIDE CONGRESSMEN ON PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

(2) From Bose to Patel:

RECEIVED TELEGRAM THIS MORNING. READ MAULANA'S AND SUBHAS'S STATEMENT DURING JOURNEY FROM SYLHET. IN MY VIEW SETTING UP DR. PATTABHI AFTER MAULANA'S WITHDRAWAL UNDESIRABLE. COMING YEAR MORE CRITICAL AND EXCEPTIONAL FROM EVERY VIEWPOINT THAN 1937. STRONGLY FEEL NO MEMBER WORKING COMMITTEE SHOULD TAKE SIDES IN CONTEST BETWEEN COLLEAGUES. YOUR PROPOSED STATEMENT WOULD ACCENTUATE DISSENSIONS BETWEEN RIGHT AND LEFT-WINGS WHICH SHOULD BE AVOIDED. DR. PATTABHI WILL NOT INSPIRE COUNTRY'S CONFIDENCE IN COMING FIGHT. PLEASE DO NOT DIVIDE CONGRESS.

(3) From Patel to Bose:

APPRECIATE YOUR TELEGRAM. NOTHING BUT SENSE OF DUTY COMPELS STATEMENT. DIFFERENCE IS NOT BETWEEN PERSONS BUT PRINCIPLES. IF CONTEST INEVITABLE HOPE IT WILL TAKE PLACE WITHOUT BITTERNESS AND IMPUTATION OF MOTIVES. RE-ELECTION IS HELD TO BE HARMFUL TO COUNTRY'S CAUSE.

STATEMENT OF VALLABHBHAI PATEL, RAJENDRA PRASAD, JAIRAMDAS DOULATRAM, J. B. KRIPALANI, JAMNALAL BAJAJ, SHANKARRAO DEO AND BHULABHAI DESAI, ALL MEMBERS OF THE ALL-INDIA CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE.

*January 24, 1939*

We have read Subhas Babu's statement with the care it deserves. So far as we know, hitherto Presidential elections have been unanimous. Subhas Babu has set up a new precedent which he had a perfect right to do. The wisdom of the course adopted by him can be known only by experience. We have grave doubts about it. We could have waited for a greater consolidation of the Congress ranks, greater toleration and greater respect for one another's opinions before making the Congress Presidential election a matter of contest. We would have gladly refrained from saying anything upon the statement. But we feel that we would be neglecting our clear duty when we hold strong views about the forthcoming election.

It was a matter of deep sorrow to us that Maulana Sahib felt called upon to withdraw from the contest. But when he had finally decided to withdraw, he had advocated Dr. Pattabhi's election in consultation with some of us. This decision was taken with much deliberation. We feel that it is a sound policy to adhere to the rule of not re-electing the same President, except under very exceptional circumstances.

In his statement Subhas Babu has mentioned his opposition to Federation. This is shared by all members of the Working Committee. It is the Congress policy. He has also mentioned ideologies, policies and programmes. All this we feel is not relevant to the consideration of the choice of Congress President.

The Congress policy and programmes are not determined by its successive Presidents. If it were so, the constitution would not limit the office to one year. The policy and programmes of the Congress, when they are not determined by the Congress itself, are determined by the Working Committee. The position of the President is that of a Chairman. More than this the President represents and symbolises as under a constitutional monarchy, the unity and solidarity of the nation. This position, therefore, has rightly been considered as one of very great honour and as such the nation has sought to confer it on as many of its illustrious sons as would be possible by annual elections. The election, as befits the dignity of this high office, has always been unanimous. Any controversy over the election, even on the score of

policies and programmes, is therefore to be deprecated. We believe that Dr. Pattabhi is quite fitted for the post of the President of the Congress. He is one of the oldest members of the Working Committee and he had a long and unbroken record of public service to his credit. We, therefore, commend his name to the Congress delegates for election. We would also, as his colleagues, urge on Subhas Babu to reconsider his decision and allow Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya's election to be unanimous.

## SECOND STATEMENT OF SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

*January 25, 1939*

It is an extremely painful task for me to engage in a public controversy with some of my distinguished colleagues on the Working Committee but, as matters stand, I have no option in the matter. The first statement which, I issued on the 21st instant was my enforced reaction to the statement of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Sahib and what I am saying now is my enforced reply to the challenging statement of Sardar Patel and other leaders. The responsibility for starting this public controversy does not rest with me but with my distinguished colleagues. In an election contest between two members of the Working Committee, one would not expect the other members to take sides in an organised manner, because that would obviously not be fair. Sardar Patel and other leaders have issued the statement as members of the All-India Congress Working Committee and not as individual Congressmen. I ask if this is fair either when the Working Committee never discussed this question. In the statement we are told for the first time that the decision to advocate Dr. Pattabhi's election was taken with much deliberation. Neither I, nor some of my colleagues on the Working Committee, had any knowledge or idea of either the deliberation or the decision. I wish the signatories had issued the statement not as members of the Working Committee but as individual Congressmen.

If the Presidential election is to be an election worth the name, there should be freedom of voting without any moral coercion, but does not a statement of this sort tantamount to moral coercion? If the President is to be elected by the delegates and not be nominated by influential members of the Working Committee, will Sardar Patel

and other leaders withdraw their whip and leave it to the delegates to vote as they like? If the delegates are given the freedom to vote as they like, there would not be the slightest doubt as to the issue of the election contest. Otherwise why not end the elective system and have the President nominated by the Working Committee.

It is news to me that there is a rule that the same person should not be re-elected President except under exceptional circumstances. If one traces the history of the Congress one will find that in several cases the same person has been elected more than once. I am also surprised at the remark that Presidential election have hitherto been unanimous. I remember to have voted for one candidate in preference to another on several occasions. It is only in recent years that the election has been unanimous.

Since the adoption of the new constitution of the Congress in 1934, the Working Committee is being nominated, theoretically at least, by the President. Since that year the position of the Congress President has been raised to a higher level. It is, therefore, but natural that new conventions should now grow up around the Congress President and his election. The position of the President today is no longer analogous to that of the Chairman of a meeting. The President is like the Prime Minister or the President of the United States of America who nominates his own Cabinet. It is altogether wrong to liken the Congress President to a constitutional monarch. I may add that the questions of policy and programme are not irrelevant and they would have been raised long ago in connection with the election of the Congress President had it not been for the fact that after the Congress of 1934, a leftist has been elected as President every time with the support of both the right and left-wings. The departure from this practice this year and the attempt to set up a rightist candidate for the office of President is not without significance. It is widely believed that there is a prospect of a compromise on the Federal scheme between the right-wing of the Congress and the British Government during the coming year. Consequently the right-wing do not want a leftist President who may be a thorn in the way of a compromise and may put obstacles in the path of negotiations. One has only to move about among the public and enter into a discussion with them in order to realise how widespread this belief is. It is imperative, in the circumstances, to have a President who will be an anti-federationist to the core of his heart.

It is really a regret to me that my name has been proposed as a

candidate for presidentship. I had suggested to numerous friends that a new candidate from the left should be put up this year, but unfortunately that could not be done and my name was proposed from several provinces. Even at this late hour I am prepared to withdraw from the contest if a genuine anti-federationist, like Acharya Narendra Deo for instance, be accepted as the President for the coming year. I feel strongly that we should have, during this momentous year, a genuine anti-federationist in the Presidential chair. If the right-wing really want national unity and solidarity they would be well-advised to accept a leftist as President. They have created considerable misapprehension by their insistence on a rightist candidate at any cost and by the unseemly manner in which they have set up such a candidate who was retiring and who had been surprised that his name had been suggested for the presidentship.

In the exceptional circumstances which prevail just at this moment in our country, the Presidential election is part of our fight against the federal scheme and as such we cannot afford to be indifferent to it. The real issue before the country is the federal scheme. All those who believe in fighting Federation and in maintaining our national solidarity in this crisis—should not endeavour to split the Congress by insisting on a candidate who was voluntarily retiring.

The presidential election is wholly an affair of the delegates and should be left to them. Let the right-wing who are in a decided majority in the Congress make a gesture to the left-wing by accepting a leftist candidate even at this late hour. I hope that my appeal will not be in vain.

#### STATEMENT OF PATTABHI SITARAMAYYA

*January 25, 1939*

Now that the contest for the Presidential place has become inevitable, it is meet that I as one of the two contestants, should make a statement relating to certain aspects that have figured somewhat prominently in the public eye in the literature that has recently been published on the subject.

I had left Bardoli on January 17 after the conclusion of the sittings of the Congress Working Committee and reached Bombay that very evening; and the impression left in my mind at the time was that

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was marked out for the presidentship of the forthcoming session of the Congress.

This was the view I had all along entertained myself, for more reasons than one. When, however, I reached my lodgings in Bombay at 7 P.M. I had a telephone message waiting for me from the Maulana asking me to ring him up as soon as I arrived. I did so and was asked by the Maulana to meet him.

I could not guess why he should have wanted me, but I left it at that and hastened to take my dinner as I had decided to leave Bombay that very night by the Madras Mail at 10-20 and in the interval call on the Maulana.

At this juncture some newspaper friends happened to go to my place and incidentally, informed me that there were three candidates, of whom I was one. As I had reason to believe that the Maulana was the candidate who was considered deserving for the presidentship, I hastened to dictate to the Press a message withdrawing my own candidature, which was telephoned out on the spot.

Then I started for the Maulana's place, and on the way bought my ticket for Bezawada, and when I saw the Maulana and somewhat hurriedly informed him that I had withdrawn, he stated that he himself was withdrawing and would be proceeding to Bardoli next morning, and he pressed me to cancel my withdrawal.

I implored him for some time that he should not think on those lines, and when I was impressed with the transparent sincerity that had prompted his decision, I went up to telephone and withdrew my withdrawal.

I left Bombay the next evening and on the evening of January 21 had a telegram from the Maulana announcing his withdrawal in my favour and wishing me unanimous election.

It is true that my nomination took place without my knowledge, but I had reason to expect it, because for some time past there has been a unanimous desire among the people of South India in general and Andhra in particular, that the turn should be given to Congressmen from the south and that too to Andhra.

I have all along discouraged such ambitions, as well as limited the range of choice for their fulfilment.

The Congress should each year have as its President a person, who answers the need of the hour, and the choice of the President should not be made a question of equitable distribution of honours among the various suitors or the various provinces.

Moreover, personally I, who have been in the public life as a whole-time worker since I gave up my medical practice in 1916, have always been actuated by one motive of service, and have never in the remotest recesses of my heart, so much as entertained any ambition. But when the Maulana had withdrawn, when there was a widespread desire on the part of Congressmen and others, of the venerable patriarch, and of elderly men of position, in a word of publicmen belonging to different schools of thought, when again the Maulana had withdrawn from the contest and had coupled that withdrawal with his good wishes and hopes for my success, when too I had reason to believe that, as an alternative to the Maulana's candidature, mine would commend itself to many of my colleagues on the Working Committee and elsewhere—I felt that my nomination as a candidate was a call to duty from the public, which I should not lightly discard.

Now I should like to make a statement regarding my position in relation to the burning questions of the day. That I am an ardent devotee of the cult of Gandhism is a fact fairly well-known in the country.

I have spoken often and written profusely on this subject as well as on purely political questions of the day. I have done as much as any one else in the country in exposing the dangers of the scheme of Federation as envisaged in the Government of India Act of 1935.

During the interval between the Lucknow Congress and the Haripura session, I had greater latitude, which I turned to best account in tearing to pieces the Indian Constitution that was sought to be thrust upon us.

Since Haripura I have had to be necessarily restrained, being a member of the Cabinet.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, there is no attempt on the part of any member of the Working Committee to enter into a compromise with the British on the question of Federation. I myself have made it clear recently in an unmistakable manner that the Viceroy's statement was a gentle knock at the door of the Congress, but that the answer of the Congress to him had already been given by the Congress President.

I may be permitted to say a word on the question of States. During the past three years I have interested myself in this subject in the firm conviction that we cannot afford to allow our country to be cut

up territorially any more than we are prepared to allow it to be dismembered communally.

Federation we want undoubtedly, but a Federation on the lines contemplated by the British is sure to make India lopsided and paralytic—a country, one side of which is whole, while the other is crippled.

The great awakening in the States may well absorb the bulk of the Congress time. If I am elected I should regard my election as an appreciation of my effort on behalf of the States.

I am working as president of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee and as a member of the Working Committee. I have come across cases of indiscipline and corruption in Congress ranks. If elected I should devote my energy also to putting our own house in order.

One thing remains to be explained. Why should I not withdraw in favour of Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose? I cannot, because I must not resist the will of valued colleagues.

I would gladly have withdrawn, if I had not shared the opinion of my colleagues that there should be no consecutive re-election except under extraordinary circumstances. No such circumstances exist in the present case.

#### STATEMENT OF VALLABHAI PATEL

*Bardoli,  
January 25, 1939*

Mr. Subhas Bose's is an amazing statement. Here are the facts. In almost every case since 1920 some members of the Working Committee have held informal consultation. When Mr. Gandhi was in the Working Committee he used to give a lead by recommending for election a name for the Presidential chair, but after his withdrawal from the Congress he has ceased to issue such statements.

Nevertheless, members, individually and collectively, have consulted him about the choice. This year, too, I have had consultations with several members. Everyone of us had felt that Maulana Azad was the only possible choice. But he could not be persuaded.

In Bardoli during the week when the Working Committee was in session, Mr. Gandhi appealed to the Maulana to allow himself to be nominated. But he was adamant. On January 15, however, he



came to Mr. Gandhi early in the morning and told him that it went against his grain to resist him, and to our great relief he decided to stand for election.

We knew at that time that Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya had been nominated by some Andhra friends, and we knew, too, that Mr. Subhas Bose had been nominated. We felt sure that both would withdraw from the contest and that Maulana Sahib would be unanimously elected.

At an informal consultation at Bardoli at one stage or the other, at which Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, Acharya Kripalani, Mr. Gandhi and myself were present, not by design but by accident, it was agreed that if, perchance, the Maulana remained adamant in his resistance, according to the constitution, Dr. Sitaramayya was the only choice left, since we were clearly of the opinion that it was unnecessary to re-elect Mr. Subhas Bose. In our minds there were never any question of Leftist or Rightist.

Let it be noted that Mr. Subhas Bose knows that the procedure adopted for his own election last year was precisely the same as that which is being adopted now. Only at that time we had no difficulty in persuading the other candidates to withdraw.

To resume the thread, though the Maulana Sahib had consented, on reaching Bombay his mind again became disturbed and as he thought that he could not shoulder the burden of high office, he rushed back to Mr. Gandhi to ask him to relieve him. Mr. Gandhi did not feel like pressing the Maulana any further. What happened after, the country knows.

It pains me to find that Mr. Subhas Bose imputes motives to the signatories (of the Bardoli statement) and to the majority of the Working Committee. I can only say that I know of no member who wants the Federation of the Government of India Act.

And, after all, no single member, not even the President for the time being of the Congress, can decide on such big issues. It is the Congress alone that can decide, and therefore, the Working Committee collectively, when the Congress is not in session.

And even the Working Committee has no power to depart from the letter or spirit of the declared policy of the Congress.

I wholly dissent from the view that the President of the Congress has any powers of initiating policies, save by the consent of the Working Committee.

More than once, the Working Committee has asserted itself in the teeth of the opposition of the Presidents, who, be it said to their credit, have always bowed to the will of the Working Committee.

All the colleagues not being in Bardoli and the time being short, I have taken the liberty of answering Mr. Subhas Bose's statement without reference to my colleagues, who are free to give their own opinion.

For me as for those, with whom I have been able to discuss the question, the matter is not one of persons and principles, not of Leftists and Rightists. The sole consideration is what is in the best interest of the country.

Those, who have spoken, had in my opinion, a perfect right to guide the delegates. I receive almost daily wires or letters from delegates for guidance, and I expect other colleagues too must be receiving them.

In the circumstances, the right becomes also a duty. But the guidance having been given it is solely for the delegates to exercise their votes in the manner they think best.

#### STATEMENT OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

*Almora,  
January 26, 1939*

For the last ten days, I have been somewhat isolated in the Kumaun Hills where newspapers reach me late, and sometimes my information is derived from news given on the Radio. Under these circumstances I have no business to intervene in a controversy, and in any event I had no desire to do so. But from the little news that has reached me, I feel that the presidential controversy has taken an unfortunate turn and wrong issues have been raised. I venture, therefore, to put certain matters before the public which might help to clarify the situation. I have so far not read the various statements that have been issued, except the Congress President's first statement.

To begin with I should like to make it clear that I am not making this statement in support of or in opposition to any candidate for the presidency. Important as the presidential election is, it is a secondary matter. What is far more important is the policy and

programme of the Congress. I have seen in the past that presidential elections do not make much difference to this policy which is ultimately laid down by the Congress itself, or the A.I.C.C. A President can, however, make a difference in the carrying out of a policy, and a Congress President is not in my opinion merely a speaker.

May I also say that I am not opposed to an election contest, and I think that when definite policies and programmes are in conflict, a contest is usually desirable and helps clarification. What are the different programmes in conflict in this presidential election? There are many vital problems in India, but as reference has been made only to the Federation, I take it that there is no conflict in the presidential election in regard to the others. Is there a conflict regarding the Federation? I am not aware of it, and the Congress attitude is definite and clear. I gave expression to this attitude in an unambiguous language in England, and in doing so I was not merely expressing my opinion, but that of the Working Committee. I took care to send full reports of what I said and did to the Congress President and the Working Committee and asked for direction. I was informed that the attitude I had taken up in regard to Federation met with the approval of the Working Committee and of Gandhiji. Since then the position has hardened considerably and it seems to be monstrous for any Congressmen to think in terms of compromising on Federation. Is the growing struggle in the Indian States a prelude to our flirting with Federation? We drift rapidly towards a crisis in India as in the world and it is in terms of this crisis that we should think.

I think it is time that we pushed away Federation from our minds as something that cannot come because we will not have it and thought more positively in terms of self-determination, of our own future apart from international reasons. The foreign policy of the British Government is so utterly bad and hateful that I want my country to have nothing to do with such a Government. There is thus no question of conflict over the Federation in this election. There are of course many conflicts within the Congress but none of them are affected much by this election. I should personally like a clarification of these conflicts and problems. The vital question before us is how we are to shape in the coming international and national crisis? We may not do anything which might create a domestic conflict and thus disable us when we most need our united strength.

I have had some experience of the Congress presidentship during trying times and on several occasions I was on the point of resigning,

because, I felt that I could serve our cause and the Congress better without office. This year some colleagues urged me to stand again for the presidentship. I refused absolutely for reasons which I need not discuss here.

For those and other reasons I was equally clear that Subhas Babu should not stand. I felt that his and my capacity for effective work would be lessened by holding this office at this stage. I told Subhas Babu so.

I was equally clear in my mind that the obvious person for presidentship this year was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Every line of reasoning led me to this conclusion. He was peculiarly fitted to deal with some of our vital problems. He had that delicate insight and sensitiveness which understood and appreciated the viewpoints other than his own. He was an elder statesman of the Congress, respected and trusted by all and most fitted to keep our varied ranks together. May I add that my admiration for his keen intelligence and rare insight has grown from year to year during the past twenty years that I have been privileged to know him? I pressed him to agree to stand for the presidentship and so did many others. We had thought that we had convinced him but unfortunately he did not agree finally. His weak health and his dislike of publicity and election contests came in his way.

Personally I do not see what principles or programmes are at stake in this election. I do not want it to be said at the end of the contest that a particular programme had been rejected when in fact it was not in issue. Whoever wins federation loses. I trust that if there is a contest the high dignity of our cause will be borne in mind by all concerned and nothing will be done which may weaken the great organisation in whose service so many of us have spent their lives. The future is dark with conflict and we shall have to brace ourselves to meet it as a united people with courage and confidence, forgetting persons and remembering principles and our cause.

STATEMENT OF RAJENDRA PRASAD

*Patna,*  
*January 27, 1939*

It is not fair to sidetrack the real issue by reference to imaginary difference on the question of Federation between Subhas Babu and

certain other members of the Working Committee. On that point there is absolutely no difference of opinion. The Haripura Congress resolution is clear and was passed without any opposition or reservation and so late as the last meeting of the A.I.C.C., the resolution was reiterated without a single dissentient voice. It is easy to understand that there are differences between Subhas Babu and others on other questions. If the presidential election is to be made the basis of such difference in political opinion and programme, the points at issue should be clearly stated and not be fogged by putting forward an imaginary difference.

With regard to Federation S. J. Bose said that the plan of Congress opposition to the Federal Scheme contained in the Government of India Act, 1935, would be on the whole in accordance with the general policy and principle of Congress policy, namely, non-co-operation. What steps this non-co-operation would take, whether there would be non-co-operation even at the stage of federal election or at the stage of acceptance of office after election was a matter of detail and tactics which would be decided on the exigencies of the situation then existing.

Asked whether Congress Ministers would be called upon to resign as part of the Congress campaign against Federation the Congress President said, at this stage I can only say if there is a struggle we shall offer opposition from every quarter. It is quite possible we may not call upon the Ministers to resign, if we feel that their remaining in power will strengthen our struggle. On the contrary, if we feel that our struggle will be stronger if they resigned, we shall do so.

As the *Modern Review* has pointed out, there are several 'ifs' in the Congress President's replies to the queries. Two of them are: if there is a struggle we shall offer opposition to contest the elections to the Federal Legislature even if the Congress policy would be to offer an uncompromising attitude towards Federation. The first 'if' may perhaps lead to the assumption that struggle is not inevitable. The second 'if' leaves room for anticipating that the Congress attitude may not after all be one of uncompromising opposition to the British made Federal Scheme.

I wonder if any so-called Right-wing member of the Working Committee has said anything approaching this. Not that Subhas Babu is not entitled to have his own opinion. But why damn others for their imaginary views when his own views are not crystallised

enough to discard 'ifs' which have led a distinguished journalist to read so much devastating meaning in them.

Now that there is going to be a contest, let delegates vote according to their choice and free will. It is an insult to their intelligence and sense of responsibility to suggest that they should vote as dictated by some members of the Working Committee. It is wrong to impugn their integrity or independence if they choose to vote for Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya.

### THIRD STATEMENT OF SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

*January 27, 1939*

Once again I am forced into a public controversy by the statements of Dr. Pattabhi and Sardar Patel. The former says that there has been a unanimous desire among the people of South India in general and Andhra in particular that the next President should be an Andhraite.

It is difficult to believe that Congressmen in any part of India think in terms of provincialism. Moreover, I have before me at the present moment telegrams from Andhradesa voluntarily assuring me of support. And so far as Tamil-Nad is concerned, friends there are among those who are most insistent that I should not withdraw from the contest.

Sardar Patel's statement contains a rather damaging confession. He says that some members of the Working Committee held an important consultation among themselves and came to a certain decision. Is it not surprising that neither the President nor other members of the Working Committee knew anything of this?

It is clear that he wants a President who will be a mere figurehead and a tool in the hands of other members of the Working Committee. The above confession also confirms the general impression that the Working Committee is really controlled by a group within it and that the other members are there on sufferance.

Though the Congress resolution on Federation is one of uncompromising hostility, the fact remains that some influential Congress leaders have been advocating conditional acceptance of the Federal scheme in private and in public.

Up-till now there has not been the slightest desire on the part of the Rightist leaders to condemn such activities. It is no use shutting one's

eyes to the reality of the situation. Can anybody challenge the fact that the belief is widely held that during the coming year, a compromise will be effected between the British Government and the Right-wing of the Congress? This impression may be entirely erroneous, but it is there all the same and nobody can deny its existence. Not only that. It is also generally believed that the prospective list of Ministers "for the Federal Cabinet has been already drawn up."

In the circumstances it is natural that the Left or radical bloc in the Congress should feel so strongly on the question of the Federal Scheme and should desire to have a genuine anti-federationist in the Presidential chair. The determination of the Congress High Command to have a Rightist in the chair at any cost has only served to make the radical elements feel more suspicious. The whole trouble has arisen because of the attitude of the Right-wing towards the Presidential election.

Even at this late hour if they accept an anti-federationist President, they can end this controversy at once and thereby avert dissensions within the Congress. Speaking for myself I have already announced in public that the real issue is that of Federation. If a genuine anti-federationist is accepted as the President, I shall gladly retire in his favour. This offer, publicly announced, will stand till the eve of the election.

#### FOURTH STATEMENT OF SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

*January 28, 1939*

On the eve of Sunday's Presidential election I desire to say a few words through the press in order to explain why I have agreed to be put up as a candidate. It will be remembered that during the last four or five months Congressmen in different parts of the country have individually and collectively publicly advocated my re-election. When my name was formally proposed as a candidate from several Provinces it was done without my knowledge or consent. Rightly or wrongly, a very large body of opinion within the Congress wanted me to be elected for another term. It now appears that some important members of the Working Committee, for reasons which it is difficult to comprehend, did not approve of the idea. It cannot be doubted that my re-election would have been virtually unanimous if they had not sent out a mandate to vote against me. It now appears

that they would rather have anybody else than my humble self.

Since the Haripura Congress my relations with the other members of the Congress Working Committee have been cordial and on the whole our work in the Committee has been conducted very smoothly. In the circumstances one may endeavour to infer why some important members of the Working Committee are so much against me, though there was a general desire in the Congress ranks for my re-election. Do they object to me because I would not be a tool in their hands? Or do they object to me because of my ideas and principles? The arguments so far put forward are not in the least degree convincing. It is said that re-election is an exceptional event. The obvious reply to that is that there is nothing in the constitution to prevent re-election—that several ex-presidents of the Congress have held that office for more than one term—that the coming year is going to be an exceptional and momentous one and that there was a general desire for my re-election.

Another argument put forward by Sardar Patel in his telegram to Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose is that re-election will be harmful to the country's cause. This argument is such an astounding one that it hardly needs any refutation. If the above leaders had not thrown all the weight of their influence against me and issued a mandate opposing my candidature, we would have known the real opinion of the Congress delegates and I have no doubt that that opinion would have come as an utter surprise to the Sardar.

It is erroneously urged in certain quarters that an election contest is going to take place for the first time this year. It is true that during the last few years there has been no contest. It is also true that this year the contest is going to be a spectacular one. But it would be a mistake to forget that previously election contests did take place, though not in such a spectacular manner as appears inevitable this year. It is, therefore, too much for a group within the Working Committee to claim that they will dictate the selection of the President every time. If we are to have a proper election by the delegates and not nomination by a group within the Working Committee, then it is essential that the delegates should have a free and unfettered choice. At the present moment not only has the mandate gone out but moral pressure is being brought to bear on the delegates in order to make them vote in accordance with it.

Sardar Patel has said in his statement that the procedure adopted last year is precisely the same as this year. This is far from true.



If the ruling group within the Working Committee had made a happy choice, no contest would have taken place this year either. But if their choice or suggestion does not meet with popular approval, should not the delegates be free to exercise their vote as they think best? If this freedom is not guaranteed to them, then the constitution of the Congress will cease to be a democratic one. It is no use having a democratic constitution for the Congress, if the delegates do not have the freedom to think and vote as they like.

Besides the issue of democracy there are other issues and more important ones too involved in the present election. If we are to maintain unity and solidarity within the Congress and if the Right and Left-wings are to work hand in hand for the attainment of India's independence, it is essential that the President of the Congress should command the confidence of both the wings. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru fulfilled this role in a magnificent manner. And perhaps, I may humbly claim that I did so though in a much lesser degree. That is why, along with a large body of Congressmen, I insist that for the coming year we should have as President a person who will be anti-Federationist to the core of his heart—a person who will command the respect and confidence of not merely the Right-wing, but also of the Left. This is all the more necessary not merely because of the coming fight against Federation but also because there is a widespread apprehension in the public mind as to the intentions of certain Right-wing leaders. To sum up, the two important issues involved in the present election are those of democracy and uncompromising opposition to the Federal Scheme. There is nothing personal in this contest and I would beg my fellow delegates to forget or ignore altogether all personal questions. I am a candidate by mere accident, simply because nobody else from the left came forward to contest the election. And as I have already stated more than once it is still possible to avoid a contest if the Right-wing will accept as President somebody who will command the confidence of the Left. If a contest does take place, as it appears inevitable at the moment of writing, the responsibility for dividing the Congress will devolve entirely on the Right-wing. Will they shoulder that responsibility or even at this late hour, will they decide to stand for national unity and solidarity on the basis of a progressive programme?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The election of the President by the delegates to the 52nd session of the Indian National Congress was held all over India on 29th January, 1939. Subhas Chandra Bose defeated Pattabhi Sitaramayya by a little over 200 votes.—Ed.

## STATEMENT OF MAHATMA GANDHI

*Bardoli,**January 31, 1939*

Mr. Subhas Bose has achieved a decisive victory over his opponent Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. I must confess that from the very beginning I was decidedly against his re-election for reasons into which I need not go. I do not subscribe to his facts or the arguments in his manifestos. I think that his references to his colleagues were unjustified and unworthy. Nevertheless, I am glad of his victory; and since I was instrumental in inducing Dr. Pattabhi not to withdraw his name as a candidate when Maulana Saheb withdrew, the defeat is more mine than his. And I am nothing if I do not represent definite principles and policy. Therefore, it is plain to me that the delegates do not approve of the principles and policy for which I stand. I rejoice in this defeat.

It gives me an opportunity of putting into practice, what I preached in my article on the walk-out of the minority at the last A.I.C.C. meeting in Delhi. Subhas Babu instead of being President on the sufferance of those whom he calls Rightists is now President, elected in a contested election. This enables him to choose a homogeneous Cabinet and enforce his programme without let or hindrance.

There is one thing common between the majority and the minority viz., insistence on internal purity of the Congress organisation. My writings in the *Harijan* have shown that the Congress is fast becoming a corrupt organisation in the sense that its registers contain a very large number of bogus members. I have been suggesting for the past many months the overhauling of these registers. I have no doubt that many of the delegates who have been elected on the strength of these bogus voters would be unseated on scrutiny.

But I suggest no such drastic step. It will be enough if the registers are purged of all bogus voters and are made foolproof for the future. The minority has no cause for being disheartened. If they believe in the current programme of the Congress, they will find that it can be worked, whether they are in a minority or a majority and even whether, they are in the Congress or outside it. The only thing that may possibly be affected by the changes is the Parliamentary programme.

The Ministers have been chosen and the programme shaped by

the erstwhile majority. But Parliamentary work is but a minor item of the Congress programme. Congress Ministers have after all to live from day to day. It matters little to them whether they are recalled on an issue, in which they are in agreement with the Congress policy or whether they resign, because they are in disagreement with the Congress.

After all Subhas Babu is not an enemy of his country. He has suffered for it. In his opinion his is the most forward and boldest policy and programme. The minority can only wish it all success. If they cannot keep pace with it, they must come out of the Congress. If they can, they will add strength to the majority. The minority may not obstruct on any account. They must abstain, when they cannot co-operate. I must remind all Congressmen that those, who being Congress-minded remain outside it by design, represent it most. Those, therefore, who feel uncomfortable in being in the Congress, may come out, not in a spirit of ill will, but with the deliberate purpose of rendering more effective service.

#### FIFTH STATEMENT OF SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

*February 4, 1939*

I have read the statement of Mahatma Gandhi on the recent presidential election with all the attention that it deserves. It gives me pain to find that Mahatma Gandhi has taken it as a personal defeat. I would respectfully differ from him on this point. The voters, that is the delegates, were not called upon to vote for or against Mahatma Gandhi. Consequently, the result of the contest does not in my view and in the view of most people affect him personally.

Much has been said in the Press during the last few days about the right and left-wings in the Congress. Several persons have interpreted the result of the election as a victory for the leftists. The fact is that I placed before the public two main issues, namely, the fight against Federation and free and unfettered choice for the delegates in the matter of choosing their President. These issues must have greatly influenced the voting and over and above these, the personality of the candidates might have had some effect. In the circumstances, I feel that while analysing the significance of the election

we should not draw on our imagination nor should we read into it more than it contains.

Assuming for argument's sake that the result of the election implies a victory of the left, we should stop to consider what the leftists' programme is. For the immediate future the leftists stand for national unity and unrelenting opposition to the Federal Scheme. In addition to this, they stand for democratic principles. Leftists will not take the responsibility of creating a split within the Congress. If a split does come it will come not because of them, but in spite of them.

Personally I am definitely of opinion that there is neither reason nor justification for a split within the ranks of the Congress. I therefore, earnestly hope that there will be no occasion now or in the near future for the so-called minority party to non-co-operate with the so-called majority party. I need hardly add that I shall try till the last to avert a split whenever any such likelihood appears before us.

A certain amount of apprehension has been caused in the minds of many as to the policy which people like myself will follow in future. Let me make it quite clear that there will be no violent break with the past in the Parliamentary or in the extra-Parliamentary sphere. So far as the Parliamentary programme is concerned, we shall only try to implement our election pledges and our Parliamentary programme with greater speed than in the past. In the extra-Parliamentary sphere, we shall endeavour to rally all our strength and resources for combating Federation and for pushing on towards 'Purna Swaraj' and we shall, of course, act in accordance with the principles and policy of the Indian National Congress.

In this connection I should also like to say that I have on some occasions felt constrained to differ from Mahatma Gandhi on public questions, but I yield to none in my respect for his personality. If I have understood him correctly, he too would like to see people think for themselves even though they may not always agree with him. I do not know what sort of opinion Mahatmaji has of myself. But whatever his view may be, it will always be my aim and object to try and win his confidence for the simple reason that it will be a tragic thing for me if I succeed in winning the confidence of other people but fail to win the confidence of India's greatest man.

# The Tripuri Address

Presidential address at the 52nd Session of the Indian National Congress held at Tripuri in March, 1939.

COMRADE CHAIRMAN, SISTER AND BROTHER DELEGATES,

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the great honour you have done me by re-electing me to the Presidential chair of the Indian National Congress and also for the warm and cordial welcome you have given me here at Tripuri. It is true that at my request you have had to dispense with some of the pomp that is usual on such occasions—but I feel that that enforced step has not taken away one iota of the warmth and cordiality of your reception and I hope that nobody will regret the curtailment of it on this occasion.

Friends, before I proceed any further, I shall voice your feelings by expressing our joy at the success of Mahatma Gandhi's mission to Rajkot and the termination of his fast in consequence thereof. The whole country now feels happy and tremendously relieved.

Friends, this year promises to be an abnormal or extraordinary one in many ways. The Presidential election this time was not of the humdrum type. The election was followed by sensational developments culminating in the resignation of twelve out of fifteen members of the Working Committee, headed by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Another distinguished and eminent member of the Working Committee, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, though he did not formally resign, issued a statement which led everybody to believe that he had also resigned. On the eve of the Tripuri Congress, events at Rajkot forced Mahatma Gandhi to undertake a vow of fast unto death. And then the President arrived at Tripuri a sick man. It will, therefore, be in the fitness of things if the Presidential address this year can claim to be a departure from precedent in the matter of its length.

Friends, you are aware that the Wafdist Delegation from Egypt have arrived in our midst as guests of the Indian National Congress. You will join me in according a most hearty welcome to all of them. We are extremely happy that they found it possible to accept our

invitation and make the voyage to India. We are only sorry that political exigencies in Egypt did not permit the President of the Wafd, Mustapha El Nahas Pasha, to personally lead this Delegation. Having had the privilege of knowing the President and leading members of the Wafdist Party my joy today is all the greater. Once again, I offer them on behalf of our countrymen a most hearty and cordial welcome.

Since we met at Haripura in February, 1938, several significant events have taken place in the international sphere. The most important of these is the Munich Pact of September, 1939, which implied an abject surrender to Nazi Germany on the part of the Western Powers, France and Great Britain. As a result of this, France ceased to be the dominant power in Europe and the hegemony passed into the hands of Germany, without a shot being fired. In more recent times, the gradual collapse of the Republican Government in Spain seems to have added to the strength and prestige of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The so-called democratic powers, France and Great Britain, have joined Italy and Germany in conspiring to eliminate Soviet Russia from European politics, for the time being. But how long will that be possible? There is no doubt that as a result of recent international developments, in Europe as well as in Asia, British and French Imperialism have received a considerable set-back in the matter of strength and prestige.

Coming to home politics, in view of my ill-health, I shall content myself with referring to only a few important problems. In the first place, I must give clear and unequivocal expression to what I have been feeling for some time past, namely, that the time has come for us to raise the issue of Swaraj and submit our national demand to the British Government in the form of an ultimatum. The time is long past when we could have adopted a passive attitude and waited for the Federal scheme to be imposed on us. The problem no longer is as to when the Federal scheme will be forced down our throats. The problem is as to what we should do if the Federal scheme is conveniently shelved for a few years till peace is stabilized in Europe. There is no doubt that once there is stable peace in Europe, whether through a Four-Power Pact or through some other means, Great Britain will adopt a strong-Empire policy. The fact that she is now showing some signs of trying to conciliate the Arabs as against the Jews in Palestine is because she is feeling herself weak in the international sphere. In my opinion, therefore, we should submit our

national demand to the British Government in the form of an ultimatum and give a certain time-limit within which a reply is to be expected. If no reply is received within this period or if an unsatisfactory reply is received, we should resort to such sanctions as we possess in order to enforce our national demand. The sanctions that we possess today are mass civil disobedience or Satyagraha. And the British Government today are not in a position to face a major conflict like an All-India Satyagraha for a long period.

It grieves me to find that there are people in the Congress who are so pessimistic as to think that the time is not ripe for a major assault on British Imperialism. But looking at the situation in a thoroughly realistic manner, I do not see the slightest ground for pessimism. With Congress in power in eight provinces, the strength and prestige of our national organization have gone up. The mass *movement has made considerable headway throughout British India.* And last but not the least, there is an unprecedented awakening in the Indian States. What more opportune moment could we find in our national history for a final advance in the direction of Swaraj particularly when the international situation is favourable to us? Speaking as a cold-blooded realist, I may say that all the facts of the present-day situation are so much to our advantage that one should entertain the highest degree of optimism. If only we sink our differences, pool all our resources and pull our full weight in the national struggle, we can make our attack on British Imperialism irresistible. Shall we have the political foresight to make the most of our present favourable position or shall we miss this opportunity, which is a rare opportunity in the life-time of a nation?

I have already referred to the awakening in the Indian States. I am definitely of the view that we should revise our attitude towards the States as defined by the Haripura Congress resolution. That resolution, as you are aware, put a ban on certain forms of activity in the States being conducted in the name of the Congress. Under that resolution, neither parliamentary work nor struggle against the State should be carried on in the name of the Congress. But since Haripura much has happened. Today we find that the Paramount Power is in league with the State authorities in most places. In such circumstances, should we of the Congress not draw closer to the people of the States? I have no doubt in my own mind as to what our duty is today.

Besides lifting the above ban, the work of guiding the popular

movements in the States for Civil Liberty and Responsible Government should be conducted by the Working Committee on a comprehensive and systematic basis. The work so far done has been of a piecemeal nature and there has hardly been any system or plan behind it. But the time has come when the Working Committee should assume this responsibility and discharge it in a comprehensive and systematic way and, if necessary, appoint a special sub-committee for the purpose. The fullest use should be made of the guidance and co-operation of Mahatma Gandhi and of the co-operation of the All-India States' Peoples Conference.

I have referred earlier to the advisability of our making a final advance in the direction of Swaraj. That will need adequate preparation. In the first place, we shall have to take steps to ruthlessly remove whatever corruption or weakness has entered our ranks largely due to the lure of power. Next, we shall have to work in close co-operation with all anti-imperialist organisations in the country particularly the Kisan movement and the Trade Union movement. All the radical elements in the country must work in close harmony and co-operation and the efforts of all anti-imperialist organisations must converge in the direction of a final assault on British Imperialism.

Friends, today the atmosphere within the Congress is clouded and dissensions have appeared. Many of our friends are consequently feeling depressed and dispirited. The cloud that you see today is a passing one. I have faith in the patriotism of my countrymen, and I am sure that before long we shall be able to tide over the present difficulties and restore unity within our ranks. A somewhat similar situation had arisen at the time of the Gaya Congress in 1922 and thereafter, when Deshbandhu Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru, of hallowed memory, started the Swarajya Party. May the spirit of my late Guru, of revered Motilalji and of other great sons of India inspire us in the present crisis and may Mahatma Gandhi, who is still with us to guide and assist our nation, help the Congress out of the present tangle is my earnest prayer.



## *Tripuri and After—A Letter*

Full text of a letter written while convalescing in Jamadoba, Bihar, to Mr. Amiya Nath Bose who was then in England.

*Jamadoba,*  
17.4.39.

My dear Ami,

It is just 2 months since I took to bed. It is the worst attack I have had for a long time. I had broncho-pneumonia with some complications (liver and intestinal infection). This illness coincided with a period of political crisis causing mental anxiety. I had no rest, physical or mental—and had to work in bed, even with high fever. At times it looked as if I would never get well. But the worst is over and I am on the road to recovery. I am going down to Calcutta on the 21st inst. for the annual meeting of the B.P.C.C., A.I.C.C. meeting etc. Though temperature is nearing normal now, weakness will persist for a long time. I should go in for a change in summer, if I could afford it. Let us see.

You get the papers—so you must have seen the statements and counter-statements before the Presidential election and after. You must have also seen the accounts of the Tripuri Congress. The Old Guard had estimated that I would get 25 or 30 per cent votes at the contest—consequently the result came like a bolt from the blue. There was consternation in their ranks. They thought that (not) only was power (seven Provincial Governments) slipping out of their hands, but the Gandhites as a body began to feel that their work of 20 years was undone in the course of a day. All their wrath fell on me. Since Deshbandhu's time nobody had given them such a defeat. Then came Gandhiji's statement—he came to the rescue of the Old Guard and called their defeat his own defeat. Opinion among "centrists" began to veer round. They were inclined to support us—but were not prepared to kick out Gandhiji—as they said.

My illness was the most tragic thing that occurred. Tripuri was frankly a defeat for us. But as a Bombay friend told me—it was a

leaders. The Communist Party was also siding with the C.S.P. but at the last moment, the revolt of the rank and file brought about a reversal of the policy decided by the C.P. leaders (in secret conference with the C.S.P. leaders)

Nobody has done more harm to me personally and to our cause in ~~this~~ this crisis than Pandit Mhrun. If he had been with us - we would have had a majority. Even his neutrality would have probably given us a majority. But he was with the old guard at Tripuri. His open propaganda against me has done me more harm than the activities of the 12 stalwarts. What a pity!

The immediate future is very uncertain. Negotiations are going on between Gandhi and myself. Whether they will lead to a settlement or not - it is too early to say. It is even possible that ultimately I may have to resign.

The C.S.P. has gone down in public estimation, but that does not mean that M.V. Roy has gained. He is touring

I feel, further, that it <sup>from the</sup> ~~may be~~  
easier for the Assoc. to ~~the~~  
the matter of it ~~to have a new President~~  
~~to~~ have a new President. After  
mature deliberation, ~~therefore~~ and in an  
entirely helpful spirit I am  
placing my resignation in your hands.

~~The time at my disposal~~  
~~has been very~~ short and ~~I have been~~  
I could prepare only a brief state-  
~~ment. This brief statement will~~  
~~be~~ ment. Nevertheless, ~~with~~ this brief  
statement will, I hope, succeed  
in clarifying the situation as it

case of one sick man lying in bed fighting (1) 12 stalwarts of the Old Guard, (2) Jawaharlal Nehru, (3) seven provincial ministries (who were canvassing for the Old Guard), and (4) the name, influence and prestige of Mahatma Gandhi. He ended by calling our defeat a moral victory.

Our defeat was due further to the betrayal of the C.S.P.<sup>1</sup> leadership and some bungling in tactics on our side. The C.S.P. is now being shaken to its foundations owing to revolt among the rank and file against the Tripuri policy of the leaders. The Communist Party was also sailing with the C.S.P. but at the last moment, the revolt of the rank and file brought about a reversal of the policy decided by the C.P. leaders (in secret conclave with the C.S.P. leaders).

Nobody has done more harm to me personally and to our cause in this crisis than Pandit Nehru. If he had been with us—we would have had a majority. Even his neutrality would have probably given us a majority. But he was with the Old Guard at Tripuri. His open propaganda against me has done me more harm than the activities of the 12 stalwarts. What a pity!

The immediate future is very uncertain. Negotiations are going on between Gandhiji and myself. Whether they will lead to a settlement or not—it is too early to say. It is even possible that ultimately I may have to resign.

The C.S.P. has gone down in public estimation, but that does not mean that M. N. Roy has gained. He is touring Bengal and is getting a good reception everywhere. Bengal naturally has a soft corner for him—but whether he will really get a position depends on his allies—whom he aligns himself with. He is too individualist and cannot go in for team-work. That is a great drawback for him.

The Presidential election and its sequel, however unfortunate, has led to a sharpening of political consciousness. In the long run it will prove to be a great incentive to progress. Whatever the immediate future may have in store for us, we have a bright future. I say this as a realist. The progressive and radical forces are 90 % with us. I am sorry that Jawahar's position even among his erstwhile admirers has been badly shaken as a result of his stand before and after the presidential election and particularly at Tripuri. The delegates refused to hear him for 1½ hours and they became

<sup>1</sup>C. S. P.—Congress Socialist Party

quiet only when Mejdada<sup>2</sup> appealed to them to be quiet. An unheard-of thing. So long.

Love,  
Ever yours,  
SUBHAS

## My Strange Illness

Full text of an article in the *Modern Review*, April, 1939.

The 15th February, 1939. After meeting Mahatma Gandhi at Shegaon and having a long talk with him, I returned to Wardha at about 6 P.M. At night, some friends came to see me and in the absence of anything urgent or important to do, we were having a chat. I had begun to feel unwell, so I took my temperature in their presence. It was 99·4. I did not take it seriously however.

The next morning, 16th February, I was to leave Wardha for Calcutta. In the morning, instead of feeling fresh, I felt out of sorts. I thought that that was due to disturbed sleep the night before. At Wardha and Nagpur stations, a large number of friends had come to see me and I had no time to think of myself. Only after the train steamed out of Nagpur station did I realise that I was extremely unwell. When I took my temperature this time, it was 101. So I went straight to bed.

After a couple of hours or so, an Anglo-Indian gentleman came into my compartment. I did not welcome his presence, particularly when I gathered that he would be travelling all the way to Calcutta—because I wanted to be left quite alone with my fever. But there was no help; he had as much right to be there as I had. After a while he looked intently at me and in a kindly tone, asked: "What is wrong with you? You look completely washed out." I replied that I was not feeling well and that I had a temperature. Then he continued, "You are perspiring I see. You must have got influenza."

The whole day and night I lay on my berth, perspiring all the time. Again and again I pondered over his words, 'you look completely washed out'. How could I look so bad as that? My facial expression always was such that even after a prolonged illness I rarely 'looked' really bad. Besides, how could a day's illness make me look pulled down to such a degree? I was puzzled.

The next morning I got up with a determination to look fit. I went into the bathroom, had a good wash and shave and came out looking somewhat better than the day before. My fellow-

passenger sympathetically asked me how I was feeling and after hearing my reply, remarked, "Yes, you are looking better this morning. Yesterday you were looking completely washed out."

From the station I went home only to find that some friends were waiting to see me. With some exertion I managed to carry on a conversation with them, but by 11 a.m. I felt so tired that I took leave of them and retired. I had to go to bed—the bed I was destined to stick to for several weeks.

The doctor came in and after a thorough examination, shook his head and took a serious view of the case. The pathologist was then sent for and he took specimens of blood, etc., for the usual tests. Later, other doctors were brought in, including the first Physician to the Calcutta Medical College, Sir Nilratan Sircar, etc.

While the doctors were feeling worried about the disease and were taxing their brains as to how best they could combat it, I was concerned more with my public engagements. On the 18th and 19th February, I had public engagements at Hajipur and Muzaffarpur in Bihar and on the 22nd February, the Working Committee of the Congress was to meet at Wardha. I reached Calcutta on the 17th February from Wardha and I was due to leave the same evening for Patna. Telegrams and telephone-calls came in from Bihar enquiring if my previous programme was O.K., and I would adhere to it. I replied in the affirmative, adding that though I was unwell, I would come at any cost. I only wanted that they should cancel all processions and make my programme as light as possible. To my people at home I said that I would leave by the night train from Patna, *en route* to Hajipur, the same evening (17th February) notwithstanding what the doctors were saying, as I was determined to fulfil my engagements on the 18th and 19th February. On being pressed to listen to medical advice I retorted that I would start even if I had a temperature of 105. Thereafter I gave instructions for my ticket to be purchased and berth reserved.

But as the hours rolled by, my temperature began to mount up and up. What was worse—a splitting headache got hold of me. And when the time came for me to start, though everything was ready, I could not lift my head. To my great sorrow I had to humble myself and give up my determination. Telegrams had to be sent regretfully that it was impossible for me to start that night, but that I would make every possible effort to start the following night. The next day my condition was no better, in fact it was worse. Moreover, all arrange-

ments had been upset by my not leaving on the 17th. So the Muzaffarpur tour had to be abandoned altogether. Nothing can describe my deep regret over this unexpected development.

Though Muzaffarpur was out of my programme after the 18th February, my mind was not at ease. I began to plan for the Wardha meeting of the Working Committee. Doctors began to give me repeated warnings that it was impossible to go to Wardha. If I gave up all thought of the Working Committee and concentrated my mind on getting well, I might be able to go to the Tripuri Congress—otherwise, even Tripuri might have to be dropped. But all these warnings were like speaking to a deaf person. My preparations went on despite medical advice, and, thanks to friends, I had an aeroplane ready to take me to Nagpur on or about the 22nd February.

On the 21st, I slowly began to realise that the doctors were right and that it was quite impossible to go to Wardha either by train or by plane. I informed Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel by wire to that effect and suggested postponement of the Working Committee meeting till the Tripuri Congress. At that time I had not the faintest idea that twelve (or thirteen) members of the Working Committee would resign almost immediately.

Much fuss has been made by interested parties over the above two telegrams and it has been alleged that I did not permit the Working Committee to transact even routine business. Such an allegation is altogether unfounded. In the first place, there was nothing in the telegrams to indicate that I did not want the Working Committee to go through routine business. My concern was over the draft resolutions for the Congress, which are usually framed by the Working Committee on the eve of its annual plenary session. In the second place, in my telegram to Sardar Patel, after giving my view regarding postponement, I requested him to ascertain the views of other members and wire same to me. The reply to my telegrams was the resignation of twelve members of the Working Committee. If these members had desired to frame the resolutions for the Tripuri Congress in my absence, I would certainly not have stood in their way. Regarding the transaction of business, if the other members of the Working Committee did not agree with me regarding postponement or if they were in doubt as to what my real intentions were, they could very easily have put through a trunk-call or telegraphed to me. To the transaction of routine business there was not the slightest objection on my part. And as to other and more important business they



would have found, if only they had enquired, that there would have been no obstruction from my side if they had desired to carry on in my absence. My only anxiety was to have such draft resolutions for the Congress prepared by the Working Committee as all the members would agree to—otherwise there was this danger that when the ‘official’ draft resolutions came up before the Subjects Committee, members of the Working Committee would be found arrayed on different sides. To obtain this unanimity, my presence was necessary when the draft resolutions were being prepared by the Working Committee. Hence I had suggested the postponement of the Working Committee meeting till the Tripuri Congress. My proposal would have worked very well indeed if twelve (or thirteen) members had not responded by throwing the bombshell of resignation.

The following telegram was sent by me to Sardar Patel on the February 21st:

*Sardar Patel, Wardha*

KINDLY SEE MY TELEGRAM TO MAHATMAJI. REGRETFULLY FEEL WORKING COMMITTEE MUST BE POSTPONED TILL CONGRESS. PLEASE CONSULT COLLEAGUES AND WIRE OPINION—SUBHAS.

But I am sorry that I have digressed. This is not a ‘political’ article and when I began scribbling, I wanted to write about “My Strange Illness” and to explain why I called my illness “Strange”. I shall now continue my story.

Till the evening of the 21st February, I was hoping against hope that I would be able to attend the Wardha meeting of the Working Committee or at least fly there on the 22nd. But the doctors had no such worry. For them, Wardha was out of the question—their eyes were on Tripuri. Their one effort was to pull me up to such a condition during the next few days that I could at least undertake the journey to the Tripuri Congress. Sir Nilratan Sircar’s bulletin had banned even the Tripuri Congress, but I pleaded and argued with my doctors and ultimately told them plainly that so long as I was alive, I could not keep away from the Tripuri Congress during such a crisis in our history. I gratefully confess that they did all that was humanly possible for them to enable me to attend the Congress.

As I look back on my five weeks’ illness, I must make one confession. From the beginning, I did not take my illness as seriously as

the doctors did—in fact I thought that they were unduly alarmist—and I did not co-operate with them as much as I should have. On the other hand, I have a legitimate excuse to offer. It was quite impossible for me to take complete physical and mental rest. I fell ill at a most critical period. The resignation of the members of the Working Committee aggravated the crisis. Statement after statement was being issued attacking me. The ‘unkindest’ cuts came from a quarter where they were least expected. The General Secretary of the Congress having resigned, I had perforce to attend to urgent business sent in by the office of the All-India Congress Committee. Regarding interviews, while I could decline to see local friends and visitors, I could not very well refuse to see Congressmen coming to see the Congress President on Congress business from far-off places. Owing to these and other factors, even with the best will in the world, I could not have complied with the advice of my doctors regarding physical and mental rest. I shall give one relevant instance here. When statement after statement was being issued against me, my silence was being misconstrued and friends in different, and even remote provinces began to urge me to issue some sort of a reply in order to meet at least some of the unfounded charges levelled against me. After a great deal of procrastination due to my ill-health, I made up my mind one afternoon to write my statement that day—come what may. It was not an easy affair, however. I had first to wade through some of the statements that had appeared so far, in order to understand what the charges were. Only after that could I commence dictating my statement. By the time I finished glancing through the typed copy and gave orders for issuing it to the Press, it was midnight. Then the temperature was taken and it was 103. Prior to that there was an improvement in my general condition and the evening temperature was not rising beyond 101 for the last two days. The doctors, therefore, deplored the set-back caused by my voluntarily undertaking mental work prematurely, but I could not help it, circumstanced as I was.

I must now come to the crux of my difficulties, because only that will explain much of what has happened. When I was lying ill in Calcutta after my return from Wardha on the 17th February, it was widely propagated by interested people that my illness was a ‘fake’ and that my ‘political’ fever was being utilised for avoiding the meeting of the Congress Working Committee on the 22nd February. This news was communicated to me by friends from a number of

provinces and I cannot doubt its authenticity. Even the bulletin issued by Sir Nilratan Sircar made no impression at all on the people who were consciously and maliciously carrying on the above false propaganda. The same propaganda was carried on at Jubbulpore and Tripuri. When I reached Jubbulpore on the 6th March at about 4 p.m., my temperature was 101. When I reached my camp at Tripuri after an ambulance-ride, it shot up to 103. On my arrival at Tripuri the Reception Committee Doctors took charge of me. After examining me, one of them looked significantly at the other and this struck me at once as strange. After a couple of days I learnt the whole story. Everybody in Tripuri had been told that I was not really ill and this propaganda had affected the doctors as well. When they examined me after my arrival and discovered that I was seriously ill, they were surprised and they then felt indignant about the false and malicious propaganda that had been carried on. What increased their indignation was that even their bulletins were not believed by interested people in Tripuri. For instance, an important ex-member of the Working Committee one day asked one of the Reception Committee Doctors if I really had a temperature of 102 and if he (the doctor) had taken the temperature himself. Reports came to me from several independent sources that even in the highest circles, my illness was not believed in. One day out of sheer exasperation, the Reception Committee Doctors sent for a Medical Board consisting of the Inspector-General of Civil Hospitals, C.P., and Berar and the Civil Surgeon of Jubbulpore. After their joint statement was issued, there was a change in the atmosphere. But the result of bringing in these big officials was that my attending the open session of the Congress was definitely banned. I could have somehow coaxed and cajoled the Reception Committee Doctors into allowing me to attend the plenary session of the Congress. But this was not possible with the officials. Before issuing their report, they were clever enough to ask me if I would trust their opinion and accept their advice. Naturally, I had to reply in the affirmative and I was, as it were, trapped—for I was then told that I could not attend the open session of the Congress. The arrangements made by the Reception Committee for myself were quite satisfactory and, from the physical point of view, I had nothing to complain of. But owing to the above and other reasons, the moral atmosphere of Tripuri was sickening to a degree. I have not experienced anything like it at any previous session of the Congress.

The letters, telegrams, etc., I have been receiving since the 17th February, not only make interesting reading but when piled up make a regular volume. Everyday they pour in—and not only do letters and telegrams come, but parcels and packets containing medicine of all kinds and amulets of every description. I was trying to analyse the above writers and senders according to their religious faith and I found that every religious denomination was represented. And not only every religious denomination, but every system of medicine (all the “pathies”, if I may use that word) and both the sexes! Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, etc.—Allopaths, Homoeopaths, Vaid, Hakims, Naturopaths, Astrologers, etc.—men and women—all have been writing to me, giving me their advice and sometimes also samples of medicine and amulets. Naturally, it is quite impossible for me now to write and thank them for their kindness. Sometimes they write more than once when they do not get a reply from me. Now what am I to do with all these prescriptions? The first thing I do is to hand them over to my doctors, who can best judge how to utilise them. But in most cases, the doctors are reluctant to make any use of the prescriptions or the medicine sent. Is it ungracious on their part or on my part? I wonder.

Besides prescriptions and medicine, I have been receiving numbers of letters and parcels of a different sort. Astrologers and *Sadhus* send me amulets and blessings. And unknown well-wishers and sympathisers send me *ashirvādi* flowers, etc., after offering prayers for my health and welfare at some temple or place of worship. According to prevailing custom these *ashirvādi* flowers, leaves, sacrificial ashes, etc. (or *nirmalaya*) have to be received with reverence and placed on the head or against the forehead for a while. But the fairer sex go even further. They are reluctant to throw them away after this operation is over, with the result that any number of these packets and amulets can be found underneath my pillow. And they are daily growing in number. Personally, I am of an exceedingly rationalistic frame of mind, but I respect the feelings and sentiments of others even where I do not agree with them.

So I go on pondering within me as to the real value of these prescriptions, medicine, amulets, flowers, sacrificial ashes, etc. It moved me profoundly to find that they came from every section of the vast Indian community and from every corner of India—from Kashmir to Cape Comorin. It brought tears of gratitude to my eyes when I found that I had such a large circle of well-wishers and sympathisers.

I had never imagined it even in my dreams. It may be that a few of the writers wanted some sort of advertisement for themselves—but there is no doubt that the vast majority were actuated solely by a genuine feeling of sympathy for me in my suffering. The prescriptions or medicine or amulets may have no objective value, but behind them all there was a genuine feeling of sympathy and affection which had for me unbounded value and deep significance. I have no doubt that these good wishes will help me greatly in my recovery—much more than earthly medicine or astrological amulets. Even where I cannot make use of medical advice or medicine, or amulets, I gratefully accept the good-wishes that move the hearts of the senders.

Owing to the morally sickening atmosphere of Tripuri, I left that place with such a loathing and disgust for Politics as I have never felt before during the last nineteen years. As I tossed in my bed at Jamadoba, by day and by night, I began to ask myself again and again what would become of our public life when there was so much of pettiness and vindictiveness even in the highest circles. My thoughts naturally turned towards what was my first love in life—the eternal call of the Himalayas. If such was the consummation of our Politics—I asked myself—why did I stray from what Aurobindo Ghose would describe as “the life divine.” Had the time now come for me to tear the veil of *Maya* and go back to the fountain-head of all love? I spent days and nights of moral doubt and uncertainty. At times the call of the Himalayas became insistent. I prayed for light in my dark mind. Then slowly a new vision dawned on me and I began to recover my mental balance—as well as my faith in man and in my countrymen. After all, Tripuri was not India. There was another India revealed by these letters, prescriptions, medicine, amulets, flowers, etc. What grievance could I have against that India—which was perhaps the real India? Then again, it struck me that at Tripuri there were two worlds. The pettiness and vindictiveness that I had experienced, referred only to a part of Tripuri. What about the other part? What grievance could I have against that part? Further, in spite of what I had experienced at Tripuri, how could I lose my fundamental faith in man? To distrust man was to distrust the divinity in him—to distrust one’s very existence. So, gradually all my doubts were dispelled till I once again recovered my normal robust optimism. In this effort to regain my normal self, these prescriptions, medicine, amulets, flowers, etc., were a great help.

I have suffered a lot physically and have had experience of a large

number of diseases. Sometimes I think that I have exhausted the whole gamut described in text-books of Pathology. I have fallen ill at home and abroad as well as in prison. In fact, I often wonder that I am still alive and kicking. But in all my life I have not experienced such acute and concentrated physical suffering continuously for a month, as I have since the 17th February, 1939. True, I have suffered much in prison. But that suffering was spread out over comparatively long periods. What has happened to me this time? I looked comparatively hale and hearty during the first part of last month. Why and how did I suddenly fall so seriously ill? Perhaps, doctors alone should attempt the answer, but cannot a lay-man—the patient himself—also try?

Doctors have before them heaps of pathological test-reports. They have, moreover, examined me repeatedly. Though they are not communicative to the patient as to the exact disease he has been suffering from, I gather that my present malady is some kind of pneumonia with perhaps liver and intestinal complications. Blood-pressure—they add—is abnormally low. Moreover, power of resistance as revealed by sedimentation tests, etc., is also very low and weakness is excessive. The system lacks sufficient strength to combat infection and recover normality. Is this explanation sufficient and adequate? I don't know.

Beyond the explanation that my vitality, for some reason or other, is exceedingly low at present—I wonder if all the clinical and other forms of examination have revealed the real causes of this prolonged illness and this acute physical suffering. A few days after I fell ill. I began to receive letters and telegrams from different places suggesting the nature of my malady. Among them were some telegrams suggesting that I had been poisoned. My doctors were amused at first. Then they gave thought to the matter but could not find any clinical data to support this theory. So they put it aside.

A few days later I was visited by a Professor of the Calcutta University, an erudite scholar in Sanskrit Literature and a man of exemplary character, for whom our family have high regard and esteem. He had been commissioned to deliver a message to us. A number of Pundits and astrologers including himself had met the day before to discuss my illness. They had come to the conclusion that ordinary causes could not account for my strange and acute illness. They were of the view that somebody in some part of the country had been practising what is known in the Tantra-Shastra as *Marana-*

*Kriya*—that is, attempt to kill by tantric process or will-power. Everybody was intrigued and amused as well. Without disbelieving the possibility of exerting abnormal will-power in accordance with tantric mental exercises—was it possible in the year of grace, 1939, for such mental phenomena as *Maran*, *Uchchatan*, *Basheekaran*, etc., to take place? Our visitor was definite that, though such phenomena were rare now, they did take place nevertheless. And he cited instances. He added that, though *Marana-Kriya* had taken place, owing to my strength, it would not have any fatal result, but would only damage my health. And he concluded by offering some advice as to how I should be careful in protecting my health.

I confess that all this talk did not convince me in the least, but it nevertheless left an uncanny feeling within me. At the back of my mind there was the faint impression of a question mark. Any other man talking in the above manner would have been dismissed with scant courtesy—but this gentleman of undoubted integrity, unimpeachable character and profound scholarship—who had nothing to do with Politics and had no axe to grind—had to be listened to even if he was not to be taken seriously.

About this time—that is a few days before I left for Tripuri—a number of friends began to press me to wear amulets in order to help me in recouping my health. My rationalistic mind revolted against this at first, but in a moment of weakness, I yielded. I accepted a couple of rings and four amulets. I accepted only those from friends whom I knew and who were not actuated by any professional motive. Amulets from people whom I did not know personally I did not wear and there were any number of them. To wear all of them would be tantamount to converting myself into an amulet-exhibition. I was so anxious to be well during the Tripuri Congress that I argued within myself that even if there was mere five per cent chance of my getting well by using amulets, why should I miss it? So I compromised with my innate rationalism—but as soon as the Tripuri Congress was over, I relieved myself of the two rings and four amulets. And now my rationalism is safe and I can trust to nature and my luck!

There are certain things about my illness which I at least as a layman cannot account for. There is no regularity or periodicity. For some days the temperature would begin to rise at noon, reach its maximum at about 6 p.m. and then slowly decline. Next morning it would be normal. Rise of temperature would be accompanied by unbearable headache which would subside only after four or five

hours' continuous application of ice. Remission would be accompanied by heavy perspiration and complete prostration. Then suddenly this order would change. Fever would persist day and night without any remission on the one side and high increase on the other. Sometimes the symptoms would point to malignant malaria, sometimes to enteric fever and sometimes to something else.

But every time the pathological test would be negative. If one day the fever shot up to 104 degrees, the next day it would come down to normal and people would expect a permanent remission. But the third day it would mount up again. The arbitrariness of the fever and the variety of symptoms would baffle both doctors and lay-men. And the excessive weakness and exhaustion which have got hold of me remain a mystery. Even today I do not think I look half as bad as I really am.

During the last five weeks or more, though I have been cut off from the outside world to a large extent—in another sense I have been in close touch with it. People who have no connection whatsoever with Politics, whom I do not personally know at all—people in remote corners of the country—even orthodox Pundits have shown such solicitude and sympathy for me in my illness that I could never imagine. I have often asked myself—"What is the bond that binds us? Why do they feel for me? What have I done to merit such affection?" The answer to these questions can be given by them alone.

One thing I know. This is the India for which one toils and suffers. This is the India for which one can even lay down his life. This is the real India in which one can have undying faith, no matter what Tripuri says or does.

*Jamadoba,  
Jealgora P.O.,  
District Manbhum*



# Bose-Gandhi Correspondence

(March-May, 1939)

*Jealgora, 24th March, 1939. Mahatma Gandhi—Birla House, New Delhi*

IN VIEW OF YOUR SUGGESTION TO SARAT REGARDING CONGRESS WORK AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF MY MEETING YOU IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, I CONSIDER IT NECESSARY TO START CONSULTATIONS WITH YOU THROUGH POST. I AM WRITING—SUBHAS.

*New Delhi, 25th March, 1939. Rashtrapati Bose—Jealgora*

YOUR WIRE. I WAS YESTERDAY AT ALLAHABAD TO SEE MOULANA AZAD AS HE WAS ANXIOUS FOR A TALK AND I POSTED A LETTER FROM THE TRAIN. AWAITING YOUR COMMUNICATION. HOPE YOUR PROGRESS IS STEADY. LOVE—BAPU.

*Jealgora, 25th March, 1939. Mahatma Gandhi—Birla House, New Delhi*

YOUR TODAY'S TELEGRAM. I AM WITHHOLDING POSTING MY LETTER TILL I RECEIVE YOURS—SUBHAS.

*Jealgora 25th March, 1939. Mahatma Gandhi—New Delhi*

YOUR LETTER NOT RECEIVED. I AM, THEREFORE, POSTING MINE—SUBHAS.

*Jealgora,  
25th March, 1939*

My dear Mahatmaji,

I hope you have seen the statement I issued to-day (Saturday, the 15th instant) in reply to those who were blaming me for causing a

stalemate in the affairs of the Congress. The immediate and urgent problem before us is the formation of the new Working Committee. A satisfactory solution of this problem entails a prior consideration of some other problems of wider significance. Nevertheless, I shall take up the former problem first.

With regard to this problem, I shall be grateful if you kindly let me know your opinion on the following points:

(1) What is your present conception of the composition of the Working Committee? Must it be a homogeneous body or should it be drawn from different parties or groups within the Congress, so that the Committee, as a whole, may represent, as far as possible, the composition of the general body of the Congress?

(2) If you still adhere to the view that the Committee should be homogeneous in character, then obviously people like myself on the one side and Sardar Patel and others on the other, cannot be on the same Committee. (I must mention here that I have always combated the idea that the Working Committee should be homogeneous in character.)

(3) If you agree that different parties or groups should be represented on the Working Committee, what should be their numerical representation?

In my view there are 2 main parties or 'blocs' in the Congress. They are probably more or less equally balanced. At the Presidential Election we had a majority. At Tripuri it was the other way, but this was due to the attitude of the Congress Socialist Party. If the C.S.P. had not remained neutral, then in spite of various handicaps, (I shall refer to them in a subsequent letter or when we meet) we would have had a majority in the open session.

(4) It appears to me as an equitable arrangement if I suggest the names of seven members and if you ask Sardar to suggest seven.

(5) Further, if I am to continue as President and function properly, it is necessary that the General Secretary must be a man of my choice.

(6) The Treasurer's name may be suggested by Sardar Patel.

I shall now refer to one of two salient implications of Pandit Pant's resolution. (I shall write on this topic at length in a separate letter.) Firstly, do you regard it as a resolution of no-confidence in me and would you like me to resign in consequence thereof? I ask this

question because several interpretations have been put on this resolution, even by the supporters of that resolution.

Secondly, what exactly is the position of the President after Pandit Pant's resolution was passed. Article XV of the Congress Constitution confers certain powers on the President in the matter of appointing the Working Committee and that article in the constitution stands unaltered to this day. At the same time, Pandit Pant's resolution lays down that the Working Committee is to be constituted by me in accordance with your wishes. What is the net result? Do I count at all? Are you to draw up the full list of the members of the Working Committee according to your free choice and will, and I am merely to announce your decision? The effect of this would be to nullify Article XV of the Congress Constitution without amending it.

In this connection I must state that the above clause in Pandit Pant's resolution is clearly unconstitutional and ultra vires. In fact, Pandit Pant's resolution itself was out of order, having been received too late. I would have been within my rights in ruling out of order Pantji's entire resolution, just as Maulana Azad was within his right in ruling out of order Shri Sarat Chandra Bose's amendment to the National Demand Resolution in the open session of the Congress. Further, from the purely constitutional point of view, even after admitting Pandit Pant's resolution, I should have ruled out of order the last clause pertaining to the formation of the Working Committee, since it militated against Article XV of the Constitution. But I am temperamentally too democratic to attach importance to technical or constitutional points. Further, I felt that it would be unmanly to take shelter behind the Constitution at a time when I felt that there was the possibility of an adverse vote.

Before I close this letter I shall refer to one other point. If I am to continue as President, despite all the obstacles, handicaps and difficulties—how would you like me to function? I remember that during the last twelve months you occasionally (perhaps often) advised me to the effect that you did not want me to be a dummy President and that you would like to see me asserting myself. At Wardha on the 15th February, when I found that you did not agree with my programme, I told you that there were two alternatives before me—either to efface myself or to stand up for my honest convictions. If I remember aright, you told me in reply that unless I voluntarily accepted your viewpoint, self-effacement would in reality amount to self-suppression and that you could not approve of

is a pretty sentimentalism of a San-Dimonian character  
can never be fruitful of results.

This game of bluff will deceive nobody  
- neither the Government nor the people - because the  
world at large is not as foolish as our brown  
hierarchy may think. We have to carry on with calm  
determination. The day is not far off when this  
brand of Gandhiism will stand unmasked. I am  
glad that you have treated the Montague's fiat with the  
contempt it deserves.

Hope all of you are improving there and  
particularly Nejobardili. When are you returning?  
You need not be in a hurry, for you must get well  
first. I find that the poor people have been at  
you there. Are the Forward Bloc people also after  
you? We have very good public support in those  
parts.

I have been pressed to stand for the  
Central Assembly and I have agreed.  
So long.

Yours v. affly  
Subhas

P.S. Some time ago I  
sent a telegram to  
Montague at Wartha  
Thanking him for his  
Vijaya present. S.C.B.

Sarat C. Bose Esq.  
Royal Hotel  
Ochindon C.P.

or more drastic remedy. The step that I have now taken is not an ordinary fast. It is the result of several months' mature deliberation, finally sealed by a vow prayerfully taken by me on the sacred day of Kali Puja.

9. I have been on hunger-strike several times before, but this fast is of an unusual type, never resorted to by me previously.

10. Man does not live by bread alone. He needs moral and spiritual sustenance as well. When he is denied the latter, you cannot expect him to live - merely to further your plans or fit in with your scheme of things.

11. I have already said in my letter of the 26th November that I have but two requests to make of you - firstly, that my letter of the 26th November, which is my political testament, be carefully preserved in the archives of the Government and secondly, that I be allowed to approach my end peacefully. Is that asking too much of you?

incidence, jail }  
2. 12. 40  
8

Yours faithfully,  
Sukhdev Chandra Sen

self-suppression. If I am to continue as President, would you still advise me not to function as a dummy President as you advised me last year?

All that I have said above presuppose that it is still possible for all parties or groups in the Congress to work together in spite of all that has happened since the Presidential Election and particularly at the Tripuri Congress.

In my next letter I shall deal with general problems, to some of which I referred in my press statement of to-day.

I am progressing steadily though rather slowly. The main obstacle to rapid recovery seems to be want of sufficient sleep.

I hope you have been improving steadily, despite your heavy pre-occupation.

With pranams.

Yours affectionately,  
SUBHAS

*On the train,  
(Birla House, New Delhi),  
24th March, 1939*

My dear Subhas,

I do hope this will find you steadily progressing towards complete recovery.

I enclose herewith a copy of Sarat's letter to me and my reply. If it represents also your sentiments then and then only my suggestions are applicable. Anyway the anarchy at the centre should end. In accordance with your request, I am keeping absolutely silent though pressure is being put upon me to give my opinion on the crisis.

I saw the resolution for the first time in Allahabad. It seems to me to be quite clear. The initiative lies with you. I do not know how far you are fit to attend to the national work. If you are not, I think you should adopt the only constitutional course open to you.

I shall have to be in Delhi still for a few days.

Love  
BAPU

*Rashtrapati Subhas Bose's telegram from Jealgora*

AWAITING YOUR LETTER, AS YOU SAY IN YOUR STATEMENT, IT IS DESIRABLE WE MEET—SUBHAS.

*Gandhiji's telegram to Subhas Bose*

RAJKOT AFFAIR TIES ME DOWN TO DELHI OR I WOULD RUN TO YOU DESPITE WEAKNESS. I SUGGEST YOUR COMING HERE AND LIVING WITH ME. I UNDERTAKE TO NURSE YOU TO HEALTH WHILE WE ARE SLOWLY CONFERRING. LOVE—BAPU.

*(First letter)*

*Jealgora,  
March 29, 1939*

My dear Mahatmaji,

I shall write to you again within a day or two; meanwhile an urgent matter has cropped up. Shri Narsingh, the Acting General Secretary of the A.I.C.C., writes to say that he wants about 20 days' notice for the meeting of the A.I.C.C.

Under the rules, the members of the A.I.C.C. must have 15 days' notice. Then again 4 or 5 days are required, according to him, for the notice to reach the remotest parts of the country. Consequently, in all we want about 20 days' time.

Subject to your approval, I am thinking that a date round about the 20th April would be suitable. But there is a difficulty. I am told that the Gandhi Seva Sangha Conference will be meeting in Bihar about the 20th April. So the two meetings will clash. The A.I.C.C., as also the Working Committee, will be meeting in Calcutta. Your presence there at the time is indispensably necessary. May I suggest that the A.I.C.C. do meet either before or after the Gandhi Seva Sangha Conference. In the former case you could come to Calcutta first and then proceed to Bihar. In the latter case, you could go to Bihar first and then proceed to Calcutta. In the former case, the Sangh Conference will have to be postponed for a week. In the latter case the A.I.C.C. meeting will have to be fixed for the end of April.

Kindly consider the matter and let me have your 'Upadesh' as to

when the A.I.C.C. should meet. Lastly, we must have you at the time of the A.I.C.C. meeting.

I am progressing. I am anxious to hear that your blood pressure has gone up again. I am afraid you have been overworking yourself.

With Pranams.

Yours affectionately,  
SUBHAS

*(Second letter)*

My dear Mahatmaji,

I received your letter of the 24th instant from the train along with the enclosures.

Firstly, my brother Sarat wrote to you on his own. You will see from his letter that he got your telegram on his return to Calcutta from here and then he wrote to you. If he had not got your telegram, I doubt if he would have written.

There are, of course, certain things in his letter which echo my feelings. But that is a different matter. The main problem appears to me as to whether both parties can forget the past and work together. That depends entirely on you. If you can command the confidence of both parties by taking up a truly non-partisan attitude, then you can save the Congress and restore national unity.

I am, temperamentally, not a vindictive person and I do not nurse grievances. In a way, I have the mentality of a boxer—that is, to shake hands smilingly when the boxing-bout is over and take the result in a sporting spirit.

Secondly, in spite of all the representations that I have been receiving, I take the Pant resolution as it has been passed by the Congress. We must give effect to it. I myself allowed the resolution to be moved and discussed, despite the ultra vires clause in it. How can I go back on it?

Thirdly, there are two alternatives before you (1) either to accommodate our views with regard to the composition of the new Working Committee, or (2) to insist on your views in their entirety. In the case of the latter, we may come to the parting of the ways.

Fourthly, I am prepared to do all that is humanly possible for me to expedite the formation of the new Working Committee and the



summoning of the Working Committee and A.I.C.C. But I am so sorry that it is not possible for me to come to Delhi now (Dr. Sunil has wired to you this morning on this point). I got your telegram only yesterday.

Fifthly, I was surprised to learn from your letter that the A.I.C.C. Office had not sent you a copy of Pant's resolution. (This has since been done.) I was still more surprised that the resolution had not been brought to your notice till you came to Allahabad. At Tripuri, the air was thick with the rumour that the resolution had your fullest support. A statement to that effect also appeared in the daily Press while we were at Tripuri.

Sixthly, I have not the slightest desire to stick to office. But I do not see reason for resigning because I am ill. No President resigned when he was in prison, for instance. I may tell you that great pressure is being brought to bear on me to resign. I am resisting because my resignation will mean a new phase in Congress politics which I want to avoid till the last.

I have been attending to urgent A.I.C.C. work during the last few days.

I shall write to you again to-morrow or the day after. I am progressing. I hope your blood pressure will soon go down again.

With Pranams.

Yours affectionately,  
SUBHAS

*P.S.*—This letter is not exactly a reply to yours. I have just jotted down the points which were in my mind. I wanted to convey them to you.

*New Delhi,*  
30.3.39

My dear Subhas,

I have delayed my reply to your letter of 26th instant for the sake of having your reply to my wire. I got Sunil's wire last night. I have now got up before morning prayer time to write this reply.

Since you think that Pant's resolution was out of order and the clause relating to the Working Committee is clearly unconstitu-

tional and ultra vires, your course is absolutely clear. Your choice of the Committee should be unfettered.

Your several questions on this head therefore do not need any answering.

Since we met in February my opinion has become strengthened that where there are differences on fundamentals, as we agreed there were, a composite Committee would be harmful. Assuming therefore that your policy has the backing of the majority of the A.I.C.C. you should have a Working Committee, composed purely of those who believe in your policy.

Yes, I adhere to the view expressed by me at Segoon at our February meeting that I would not be guilty of being party to any self-suppression by you, as distinguished from voluntary self-effacement. Any subordination of a view which you may strongly hold as in the best interest of the country would be self-suppression. Therefore, if you are to function as President your hands must be unfettered. The situation before the country admits of no middle course.

So far as the Gandhites (to use that wrong expression) are concerned they will not obstruct you. They will help you where they can, they will abstain where they cannot. There should be no difficulty whatsoever, if they are in a minority. They may not suppress themselves if they are clearly in a majority.

What worries me however is the fact that the Congress electorate is bogus and that therefore majority and minority lose their full meaning. Nevertheless till the Congress stable is cleansed, we have to manage with the instrument we have for the time being. The other thing worrying me is the terrible distrust among ourselves. Joint work is an impossibility where the workers distrust one another.

I think there is no other point in your letter that needs answering.

In all you do, may you be guided by God. Do be well quickly by obeying the doctors.

Love  
BAPU

*Note*—So far as I am concerned our correspondence need not be published. But you have my permission to publish it, if you think otherwise.

*New Delhi, 31st March, 1939*

YOUR LETTER. REPLY TO FIRST LETTER POSTED YESTERDAY. ALL-INDIA MEETING MUST HAVE PRECEDENCE. PROCEDURE RULE 2 SAYS EMERGENCY MEETING REQUIRES SEVEN DAYS' NOTICE WHICH CAN BE GIVEN THROUGH PRESS. LOVE—BAPU.

*Jealgora, 31st March, 1939*

YOUR TODAY'S TELEGRAM. FROM MY HEALTH VIEWPOINT ANY DAY AFTER 20TH PREFERABLE. WORKING COMMITTEE MEETS BEFORE ALL-INDIA. NO OBJECTION TO GANDHI SEVA SANGHA CONFERENCE MEETING BEFORE ALL-INDIA. IN FACT WOULD PERSONALLY SUIT ME BETTER. HOWEVER REGARDING DATE SHALL BE GUIDED BY YOUR WISHES. PRANAMS—SUBHAS.

*New Delhi, 1st April, 1939*

YOUR WIRE. FIX DATE THAT SUITS YOU BEST. I SHALL ACCOMMODATE MYSELF TO YOUR DATE. LOVE—BAPU.

*Jealgora, March 31st, 1939*

My dear Mahatmaji,

I saw your telegram to Sunil which you sent in reply to his long telegram regarding my health. When you wired suggesting my going to Delhi, I thought it best to let the Doctors speak out their mind on the subject. So Sunil wired to you.

I have been pondering over the various points in your letter of the 24th instant to me (from the train) and your letter to Sarat of the same date and over the situation in general. It is really unfortunate for me that I fell ill at such a critical time. But events have so moved in rapid succession that I have not had a chance of quick recovery. Besides, both before Tripuri and after, I have not been treated in certain influential quarters (there is no reference to you at all in this—let me make it clear) with the consideration that was due to me. But there is no reason for me to resign on account of my illness. As I stated in my letter of yesterday (my second letter to you) no President, to my knowledge, resigned when he was in prison even for a long period. It may be that I shall have to resign after all—but if that takes place, it will be due to quite different reasons.

I think I said in my second letter that though pressure was being brought to bear on me to resign, I was resisting. My resignation would mean the beginning of a new phase in Congress politics which I want to avoid till the last. If we come to the parting of the ways, a bitter civil war will commence and whatever be the upshot of it—the Congress will be weakened for some time to come and the benefit will be reaped by the British Government. It is in your hands to save the Congress and the country from this calamity. People who are bitterly opposed for various reasons to Sardar Patel and his group, still have confidence in you and believe that you can take a dispassionate and non-partisan view of things. To them you are a national figure—above parties and groups—and you can therefore restore unity between the warring elements.

If for any reason that confidence is shaken—which God forbid—and you are regarded as a partisan, then God help us and the Congress.

There is no doubt that there is to-day a wide gulf between the two main parties or blocs in the Congress. But the gulf can yet be bridged—that by you. I cannot say anything about the mentality of our political opponents—Tripuri had given us a very bad experience of them. But I can speak for our side. We are not vindictive and we do not nurse grievances. We are prepared to “forgive and forget”—as they say—and join hands once again for the sake of the common cause, viz., the political and economic emancipation of India. When I talk of “our side,” I exclude the official C.S.P. We discovered for the first time at Tripuri what a small following the official C.S.P. had. The C.S.P. has now split the rank and file and several provincial branches having revolted against the official leaders because of what is called their vacillating policy. A large section of the C.S.P. will move with us in future, in spite of what the top leadership may do. If you have any doubts on this score you have only to wait and see.

The letter of my brother Sarat to you shows that he is feeling very bitter. This, I presume, is due largely to his experiences at Tripuri, because he had no such feeling when he left Calcutta for Tripuri. Naturally, he knows more about the happenings at Tripuri than I do—because he could move about freely, meet people and obtain information. But though I was confined to bed, I got enough information from several independent sources regarding the attitude of responsible circles politically opposed to us—to make me feel thoroughly sick of the whole affair. I may say further that, when I

left Tripuri, I felt such a loathing and disgust for Congress politics as I have not done for the last nineteen years. Thank God, I have got over that feeling now and have recovered my composure.

Jawahar, in one of his letters (and possibly press statements), remarked that the A.I.C.C. office had deteriorated under my presidentship. I resent that remark as unfair and unjust. He did not perhaps realise that in trying to damn me, he has damned Kripalaniji and the entire staff. The office is in the hands of the Secretary and his staff and if it deteriorates, it is they who are responsible for it. I am writing to Jawahar at length on this point. I am mentioning this to you because you have said something about the interim administration in your letter to Sarat. The only way in which we can help the office is to appoint a permanent Secretary at once, even if there is delay in appointing the rest of the Working Committee. But if the Working Committee is going to be appointed soon, we need not appoint the General Secretary in advance.

I shall be grateful if you could let me know your reaction to Pant's resolution. You are in this advantageous position that you can take a dispassionate view of things—provided, of course, you get to know the whole story of Tripuri. Judging from the papers, most of the people who have seen you so far seem to belong to one school—namely those who supported Pant's resolution. But that does not matter. You can easily assess things at their proper value, regardless of the persons who visit you.

You can easily imagine my own view of Pant's resolution. But my personal feelings do not matter so much. In public life we have often to subordinate personal feelings to public considerations. As I have said in a previous letter, whatever one may think of Pant's resolution from the purely constitutional point of view, since it has been passed by the Congress, I feel bound by it. Now do you regard that resolution as one of no-confidence in me and do you feel that I should resign in consequence thereof? Your view in this matter will influence me considerably.

Perhaps you are aware that at Tripuri it was given out by those who were canvassing in support of Pant's resolution, that telephonic conversation had taken place with Rajkot and that resolution had your full support. A report to that effect appeared in the daily Press also. It was further given out in the private conversation that nothing short of that resolution in its entirety would satisfy either you or your orthodox followers. Personally, I did not and do not

believe in such reports, but they undoubtedly had their vote-catching value. When Pant's resolution was shown me for the first time by Sardar Patel, I suggested to him (Rajen Babu and Maulana Azad were also there at the time) that if certain changes were made, the resolution in the amended form would be passed by the Congress un-animously. The amended form of the resolution was also sent to Sardar Patel, but there was no response from his side. Their attitude seemed to be—not a word, not a comma, should be changed. I suppose Rajkumari Amrit Kaur has handed over to you the amended form of the resolution. If the object of Pant's Resolution was to reiterate faith in your principles and your leadership and guidance, that was provided in the amended resolution—but if the object was to avenge the result of the Presidential Election, then, of course, the amended resolution did not suffice. Personally I do not see how Pant's Resolution has enhanced your prestige, influence and authority. 45 votes were cast against you in the Subjects Committee and, in the open session, whatever interested parties may say, my information from various independent sources is to the effect that in spite of the neutrality of the Congress Socialist Party, at least 800 votes, if not more, out of about 2200 were cast against you. And if the Congress Socialist Party had voted as they did in the Subjects Committee, then the resolution would have been defeated. In any case, the result of the voting would have been problematical. With slight changes in the resolution, not one vote would have been cast against the resolution and your leadership would have had the unanimous support of all Congressmen. Your prestige before the British Government and before the whole world would have gone up like a shot. Instead, your name and prestige were exploited by those who wanted to wreak vengeance on us. Consequently, instead of enhancing your prestige and influence they have dragged it down to an unimaginable depth—for the whole world now knows that though you or your followers managed to get a majority at Tripuri, there is an existence of a powerful opposition. If matters are allowed to drift, this opposition is bound to gain in strength and in volume. What is the future of a party that is deprived of radical, youthful and progressive elements? The future is similar to that of the Liberal Party of Great Britain.

I have said enough to acquaint you with my reaction to Pant's Resolution. I shall now be grateful if you kindly let me know what your reaction is. Do you approve of Pant's Resolution or would

you rather have seen it passed unanimously in an amended form on the lines that we had suggested?

There is one other matter to which I shall refer in this letter—that is the question of our programme. I submitted my views to you on the 15th February at Wardha. What has happened since then has served to confirm my views and to justify my prediction. For months I have been telling friends that there would be a crisis in Europe in spring which would continue till summer. The international situation, as well as our own position at home, convinced me nearly 8 months ago that the time had come for us to force the issue of Purna Swaraj. Unfortunately for us and for the country, you do not share our optimism. You are obsessed with the idea of corruption within the Congress. Moreover, the bogey of violence alarms you. Though I am at one with you in your determination to root out corruption within the Congress, I do not think that taking India as a whole, there is more corruption today than before and so far as violence is concerned, I feel sure there is far less of it to-day than before. Previously, Bengal, Punjab and United Provinces could have been regarded as the home of organized revolutionary violence. To-day there is much more of the spirit of non-violence there. And speaking for Bengal, I can say with full authority that the Province was never more non-violent during the last 30 years than today. For these and other reasons we should lose no time in placing our National Demand before the British Government in the form of an ultimatum. The idea of an ultimatum does not appeal to you or to Pandit Jawaharlal. But in all your public life, you have given any number of ultimatums to the authorities and have advanced the public cause thereby. The other day at Rajkot you did the same thing. What objection can there be, therefore, to submitting our National Demand in the form of an ultimatum? If you do so and prepare for the coming struggle simultaneously, I am sure that we shall be able to win Purna Swaraj very soon. The British Government will either respond to our demand without a fight—or, if the struggle does take place, in our present circumstances, it cannot be a long-drawn one. I am so confident and so optimistic on this point that I feel that if we take courage in both hands and go ahead, we shall have Swaraj inside of 18 months at the most.

I feel so strongly on this point that I am prepared to make any sacrifice in this connection. If you take up the struggle, I shall most gladly help you to the best of my ability. If you feel that the Congress

will be able to fight better with another President, I shall gladly step aside. If you feel that the Congress will be able to fight more effectively with a Working Committee of your choice, I shall gladly fall in line with your wishes. All that I want is that you and the Congress should in this critical hour stand up and resume the struggle for Swaraj. If self-effacement will further the national cause, I assure you most solemnly that I am prepared to efface myself completely. I think I love my country sufficiently to be able to do this.

Pardon me for saying that the way you have been recently conducting the States people's struggle, does not appeal to me. You risked your precious and valuable life for Rajkot and while fighting for the Rajkot people you suspended the struggle in all other States. Why should you do so? There are six hundred and odd States in India and among them Rajkot is a tiny one. It would not be exaggeration to call the Rajkot struggle a flea-bite. Why should we not fight simultaneously all over the country and have a comprehensive plan for the purpose? This is what millions of your countrymen think, though out of personal reverence for you, they may not say so openly.

In conclusion, I may say that many people like myself cannot enthuse over the terms of the Rajkot settlement. We, as well as the Nationalist Press, have called it a great victory—but how much have we gained? Sir Maurice Gwyer is neither our man nor is he an independent agent. He is a Government man. What point is there in making him the umpire? We are hoping that his verdict will be in our favour. But supposing he declares against us, what will be our position?

Moreover, Sir Maurice Gwyer is a part and parcel of the Federal Scheme we have resolved to reject. In the case of a conflict with the British Government, if we decide to have a High Court Judge or a Sessions Judge as umpire we can always have a settlement with the British Government. But what shall we gain from such a settlement? Further, there are many people who fail to understand why after the interview with the Viceroy, you should be waiting in Delhi. Perhaps, in view of your weak health, a rest was necessary before undertaking another long journey. But to the British Govt. and its supporters it may appear as if you are attaching too much importance to the Federal Chief Justice and thereby enhancing his prestige.

My letter has become too long, so I must stop here. If I have said anything which appears to you to be erroneous, I hope you



will pardon me. I know you always like people to speak frankly and openly. That is what has emboldened me in writing this frank and long letter.

I have been progressing steadily though slowly. I do hope this will find you better and your blood pressure much lower.

With respectful Pranams.

Yours affectionately,  
SUBHAS

*Jealgora, 1st April, 1939. Mahatma Gandhi, New Delhi*

MAY I ANNOUNCE WORKING COMMITTEE 28TH AND ALL-INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE 30TH TO AVOID DISTURBING GANDHI SEVA SANGHA CONFERENCE DATES ALREADY ANNOUNCED—SUBHAS.

*Birla House, New Delhi,  
2nd April, 1939*

My dear Subhas,

I have yours of 31st March as also the previous one. You are quite frank and I like your letters for the clear enunciation of your views.

The views you express seem to me to be so diametrically opposed to those of the others and my own that I do not see any possibility of bridging them. I think that each school of thought should be able to put forth its views before the country without any mixture. And if this is honestly done, I do not see why there should be any bitterness ending in civil war.

What is wrong is not the differences between us but loss of mutual respect and trust. This will be remedied by time which is the best healer. If there is real non-violence in us, there can be no civil war, much less bitterness.

Taking all things into consideration, I am of opinion that you should at once form your own Cabinet fully representing your views, formulate your programme definitely and put it before the forthcoming A.I.C.C. If the Committee accepts the programme, all will be plain-sailing and you should be enabled to prosecute it unhampered by the minority. If on the other hand your programme is not accepted, you should resign and let the Committee choose its President. And

you will be free to educate the country along your own lines. I tender this advice irrespective of Pandit Pant's Resolution.

Now for your questions. When Pandit Pant's Resolution was produced, I was on my bed. Mathuradas, who happened to be in Rajkot that day, one morning brought me the message that there was to be a resolution expressing confidence in the old horses. I had not the text before me. I said it would be good so far as it went, for I had been told at Segaon that your election was not so much confidence in you as censure of the old horses especially the Sardar. After this I saw the actual text only in Allahabad when I went to see the Maulana Sahib.

My prestige does not count. It has an independent value of its own. When my motive is suspected or my policy or programme rejected by the country, the prestige must go. India will rise and fall by the quality of the sum total of her many millions. Individuals, however high they may be, are of no account except in so far as they represent the many millions. Therefore let us rule it out of consideration.

I wholly dissent from your view that the country has been never so non-violent as now. I smell violence in the air I breathe. But the violence has put on a subtle form. Our mutual distrust is a bad form of violence. The widening gulf between Hindus and Mussalmans points to the same thing. I can give further illustrations.

We seem to differ as to the amount of corruption in the Congress. My impression is that it is on the increase. I have been pleading for the past many months for a thorough scrutiny.

In these circumstances I see no atmosphere of non-violent mass action. An ultimatum without effective sanction is worse than useless.

But as I have told you, I am an old man, perhaps growing timid and over-cautious and you have youth before you and reckless optimism born of youth. I hope you are right, I am wrong. I have the firm belief that the Congress as it is today cannot deliver the goods, cannot offer civil disobedience worth the name. Therefore if your prognosis is right, I am a backnumber and played out as the generallissimo of Satyagraha.

I am glad you have mentioned the little Rajkot affair. It brings into prominent relief the different angles from which we look at things. I have nothing to repent of in the steps I have taken in connection with it. I feel that it has great national importance. I have not

stopped civil disobedience in the other States for the sake of Rajkot. But Rajkot opened my eyes, it showed me the way. I am not in Delhi for my health. I am reluctantly in Delhi awaiting the Chief Justice's decision. I hold it to be my duty to be in Delhi till the steps to be taken in due fulfilment of the Viceroy's declaration in his last wire to me are finally taken. I may not run any risk. If I invited the Paramount Power to do its duty, I was bound to be in Delhi to see that the duty was fully performed. I saw nothing wrong in the Chief Justice being appointed the interpreter of the document whose meaning was put in doubt by the Thakor Sahib. By the way, Sir Maurice will examine the document not in his capacity as Chief Justice but as a trained jurist trusted by the Viceroy. By accepting the Viceroy's nominee as Judge, I fancy I have shown both wisdom and grace and what is more important I have increased the Viceregal responsibility in the matter.

Though we have discussed sharp differences of opinion between us, I am quite sure that our private relations will not suffer in the least. If they are from the heart, as I believe they are, they will bear the strain of these differences.

Love  
BAPU

*New Delhi, 2nd April, 1939*

POSTED FULL REPLY TO YOUR LETTERS. MY ADVICE THEREIN IS IRRESPECTIVE OF PANDIT PANT'S RESOLUTION AND IN VIEW OF DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSITE VIEWS HELD BY TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT, YOU SHOULD FORTHWITH FORM YOUR OWN CABINET FULLY REPRESENTING YOUR POLICY. YOU SHOULD FRAME AND PUBLISH YOUR POLICY AND PROGRAMME AND SUBMIT THE SAME TO A.I.C.C. IF YOU SECURE MAJORITY YOU SHOULD BE ENABLED TO CARRY OUT POLICY UNHAMPERED. IF YOU DO NOT SECURE MAJORITY, YOU SHOULD RESIGN AND INVITE A.I.C.C. TO ELECT NEW PRESIDENT. GIVEN HONESTY AND GOOD WILL, I DO NOT FEAR CIVIL WAR. LOVE—BAPU.

*Jealgora, 3rd April, 1939*

YOUR LETTER AND TELEGRAM IN REPLY TO MY LETTER. I AM CONSIDERING THEM. MEANWHILE I FEEL THAT MY POSITION REGARDING THE PANT RESOLUTION IS MISUNDERSTOOD BY YOURSELF AND A SECTION OF PUBLIC. THOUGH THE LAST

CLAUSE IS STRICTLY UNCONSTITUTIONAL, I ALLOWED IT AND AM BOUND BY THE VERDICT OF THE CONGRESS. I CONSIDER A SHORT PRESS STATEMENT NECESSARY TO EXPLAIN THIS POSITION. KINDLY WIRE IF YOU HAVE ANY OBJECTION. PRANAMS—SUBHAS.

*New Delhi, 4th April, 1939*

NEWSPAPER CORRESPONDENTS ASKING ALL KINDS OF QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR CORRESPONDENCE. I HAVE REFERRED THEM ALL TO YOU. I HAVE DISCLOSED NOTHING TO ANYONE EXCEPT COLLEAGUES AND CO-WORKERS. LOVE—BAPU.

*Jealgora, 5th April, 1939*

ASSOCIATED PRESS YESTERDAY REQUESTED AUTHORITATIVE REPORT SAYING UNITED PRESS ISSUING FORECAST. HAVE INFORMED THEM IMPOSSIBLE DISCLOSE ANYTHING NOW, HAVE SHOWN PAPERS ONLY ONE PERSON AND MAY SHOW THREE MORE FRIENDS DURING THIS WEEK. MY VIEW PUBLICITY SHOULD BE ARRANGED IN FULNESS BY OUR MUTUAL AGREEMENT. PAPERS REPORT FROM NEW DELHI, ALL-INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE FIXED 28, BUT NO REPLY RECEIVED FROM YOU—SUBHAS.

*New Delhi*

YOUR WIRE. NO DATE GIVEN OUT FROM HERE. MISSED CONFIRMING YOUR WIRE, FORGIVE. I LEARN TODAY GANDHI SEVA SANGH HAS BEEN POSTPONED OWING TO PLAGUE, FIX ANY DATE CONVENIENT TO YOU. AS TO PUBLICATION I LEAVE IT ENTIRELY TO YOU. LOVE—BAPU.

*Jealgora*

AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA PUBLISHES TODAY A REPORT OF OUR CORRESPONDENCE FROM DELHI. THOUGH NOT QUITE CORRECT, IT CLEARLY SHOWS NEWS IS LEAKING FROM THERE—SUBHAS.

*Jealgora*

SINCE MY LAST TELEGRAM I HAVE SEEN OTHER PAPERS INCLUDING 'LEADER.' CLEAR INDICATION NEWS OF OUR CORRESPONDENCE IS LEAKING FROM DELHI. KINDLY DO THE NEEDFUL—SUBHAS.

*New Delhi, 5th April, 1939*

NEWSPAPERS HAVE A KNACK OF HIDING TRUTH. THEY MANUFACTURE NAMES OF PLACES OF ORIGIN ALSO AND IMAGINE THINGS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED. CAN ONLY ASSURE YOU THAT NO ONE TO MY KNOWLEDGE HERE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR NEWS. TELL ME WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE ME TO DO. LOVE—BAPU.

*Jealgora,  
6th April, 1939*

My dear Mahatmaji,

In one of your letters to Mejdada, my brother Sarat, you suggested a heart-to-heart talk between the leaders of both parties with a view to clearing the ground for united action in future. I think it is a magnificent idea and I am fully prepared to do my best in this matter regardless of what has happened in the past. Will you kindly let me know if you would like me to do anything in this behalf and if so, what? Personally, I feel that your influence and personality could achieve much in this endeavour to bring about unity. Will you not make one last supreme effort to bring everybody together before we give up all hope of unity? I would beg of you once again to remember in what light the country still regards you. You are not a partisan, and people, therefore, still look up to you to bring together all the warring elements.

I have been pondering deeply over the advice you have given me regarding the formation of the Working Committee. I feel that your advice is the counsel of despair. It destroys all hope of unity. It will not save the Congress from a split—on the contrary, it will make the path safe for such a contingency. To advise a homogeneous cabinet in the present circumstances will mean advising the parties to part company now. Is that not a terrible responsibility? Do you feel quite sure that joint work is impossible? On our side we do not think so. We are prepared to do our best to “forgive and forget” and join hands for the sake of common cause and we can look up to you to bring about an honourable compromise. I have already written and spoken to you that the composition of the Congress being what it is—and there being no possibility in the immediate future of any remarkable change, the best course would be to have a composite cabinet, in which all the groups would be represented as far as possible.

I understand that you are against this idea of a Composite Cabinet. Is your opposition due to the grounds of principle (viz., joint work is impossible in your view) or is it because you feel that the "Gandhiites" (I am using this expression in the absence of anything better and you will please pardon me for doing so) should have a larger representation on the Cabinet? In the latter case, please let me know so that I may have an opportunity of reconsidering the matter. In the former case, please reconsider the advice you have already tendered in the light of what I am submitting in this letter. At Haripura, when I suggested inviting the Socialists to serve on the Cabinet, you told me distinctly that you were in favour of my doing so. Has the situation changed so materially since then as to induce you to insist on a homogeneous cabinet?

You have referred in your letters to the two parties being so "diametrically opposed." You have not amplified the point and it is not clear if the opposition you refer to is based on programme or on personal relations. Personal relations are in my view, a passing phenomenon. We may quarrel and fight, but we can shake hands and make up our differences. Take for instance, Swarajist episode in recent Congress history. As far as I am aware, after a period of opposition the relations between Deshbandhu and Pandit Motilalji with yourself became as sweet as humanly possible. In Great Britain, the three major parties can always join hands and work on the same Cabinet when an emergency arises. In continental countries like France, every Cabinet is normally a composite Cabinet. Are we less patriotic than Britishers and Frenchmen? If we are not, then why cannot we have composite cabinets functioning effectively?

If you think that your opposition is based on programme, etc., rather than on personal considerations, I should like very much to have your view in this matter.

Wherein do you think that our programmes differ, and that too so fundamentally that joint action is not possible? I know that we have certain differences, but as I wrote to my ex-colleagues of the Working Committee in reply to their letter of resignation, our points of agreement are, in my view, more numerous than our points of difference. I still adhere to this view—Tripuri notwithstanding.

You have said in one of your letters in connection with my idea of an ultimatum on the issue of Swaraj that there is no atmosphere for non-violent mass action. But did you not have non-violent mass action in Rajkot? Are you not having it in some other States also?

These States' people are comparatively untrained in the practice of Satyagraha. We in British India can claim more experience and training—comparatively speaking at least. If the States' people can be permitted to resort to Satyagraha in their struggle for civil liberty and responsible government, why not we in British India?

Now take the National Demand Resolution passed at the Tripuri Congress with the support of the Gandhiites. Though it has beautifully vague phrases and several pious platitudes, it has, in a certain sense, much in common with my idea of an ultimatum and preparing for the coming struggle. Now, do you approve of this resolution? If you do, then why cannot you go a step further and accept my plan?

I shall now come to Pandit Pant's Resolution. The important part of it (last portion, I mean) contains two points. Firstly, the Working Committee must command your confidence—implicit confidence. Secondly, it must be formed in accordance with your wishes. If you advise a homogeneous Cabinet, and such a Cabinet is formed, one could perhaps say that it has been formed "in accordance with your wishes." But could it be claimed that it commands your confidence? Will it be open to me to get up at the meeting of the A.I.C.C. and tell the members that you have advised the formation of a homogeneous Cabinet and that the new Cabinet commands your confidence? On the other hand, if you advise the formation of a Cabinet which does not command your confidence, will you be giving effect to the Pant Resolution; will you be doing the right thing, from your point of view? I would beg of you to consider this aspect of the question. If you take cognisance of the Pant Resolution, you will not only have to communicate your wishes regarding the new Working Committee, but you will, at the same time have to advise the formation of such a Committee as will command your confidence.

You have not yet said anything as to the merits of the Pant Resolution. Do you approve of it? Or would you rather have had a unanimously passed resolution, more or less on the lines suggested by us—which would reiterate faith in your principles and confidence in your guidance, without the controversial clauses? Then, what is the President's position regarding appointing the W. C. after this resolution was passed? I am again asking this question because the present Constitution is practically your handiwork and your opinion in this matter will carry great weight with me. There is another question in this connection which I have been

asking you. Do you regard this resolution as one of no confidence in me? If so, I shall resign at once and that too unconditionally. Some papers have criticised this question of mine in my Press statement on the ground that I should decide for myself what the significance of the resolution is. I have sense enough to give my own interpretation, but there are occasions when personal interpretations should not be one's sole guide. Speaking quite frankly, I feel that my stand has been justified by the result of the Presidential election. I have now no desire whatsoever to stick to office for one day unless I can thereby advance the public cause as I understand it. The hesitation or the delay that has arisen on my side is because it is not so easy to decide. Among my supporters there are two schools of thought—one holding that I should break off negotiations at once as being a hopeless effort and tender my resignation. The latter have been bringing great pressure to bear on me, but I am resisting. I want to be clear before my own conscience that I have striven till the last to preserve unity within our ranks. Moreover, I know what my resignation will mean in the present circumstances and what its consequences will be. I should add here that the first school, viz., those who want me to exhaust all possibility of a compromise—believe that you will be able to take a thoroughly non-partisan view of things and thereby bring the two parties together.

I must explain further why I say that I shall resign automatically if you tell that Pant's Resolution signifies no-confidence. You know very well that I do not follow you blindly in all that you say or believe as so many of my countrymen do. Why then should I resign if you opine that the resolution signifies no-confidence? The reason is plain and simple. I feel it as galling to my conscience to hold on to office, if the greatest personality in India today feels—though he may not say so openly—that the passing of the resolution should automatically have brought in my resignation. This attitude is perhaps dictated more by personal regard for you and your opinion in this matter.

Perhaps, as some papers suggest, you have an idea that the Old Guard should be put back into office. In that event I would beg of you to come back to active politics, become a four-anna Congress member and assume direct charge of the Working Committee. Pardon me for saying so and I say this without meaning offence to anybody—there is a world of difference between yourself and your lieutenants, even your chosen lieutenants. There are people who will



do anything for you—but not for them. Will you believe me when I say that at the Presidential election even some Gandhites in several provinces voted for me, against the direction of the Old Guard? If your personality is not dragged into the picture, I shall continue to have their support—the Old Guard notwithstanding. At Tripuri the Old Guard cleverly dropped out of the picture and more cleverly pitted me against you. (But there was no quarrel between yourself and myself.) Afterwards they said that Tripuri was a great victory for them and a defeat for me. The fact of the matter is that it was neither a victory for them nor a defeat for me. It was a victory for you (without any cause for a fight with you at all) but a Pyrrhic victory—victory purchased by a certain loss of prestige.

But I am digressing. I wanted to appeal to you to come forward and directly and openly conduct the affairs of the Congress. This will simplify matters. Much of the opposition against the Old Guard—and opposition there certainly is—will automatically vanish.

If you cannot do this, then I have an alternative suggestion to make. Please resume the national struggle for Independence as we have been demanding and begin by delivering the ultimatum to the British Government. In that event we shall all gladly retire from our official positions. If you so desire, we shall gladly hand over these positions to whomsoever you like or trust. But only on one condition, the fight for Independence must be resumed. People like myself feel that today we have an opportunity which is rare in the life-time of a nation. For that reason we are prepared to make any sacrifice that will help the resumption of the fight.

If till the last you insist that a composite Cabinet is unworkable and a homogeneous Cabinet is the only alternative before us, and if you want me to form a Cabinet of my choice, I would earnestly request you to give me your vote of confidence till next Congress. If in the meantime, we fail to justify ourselves by our service and suffering, we shall stand condemned before the Congress and we shall naturally and quite properly be kicked out of office. Your vote of confidence will mean the vote of confidence of the A.I.C.C. in the present circumstances. If you do not give us your vote of confidence but at the same time ask us to form a homogeneous Cabinet, you will not be giving effect to Pant's Resolution.

Once again I would beg of you to let me know if your opposition to a composite Cabinet is due to considerations of principle or to the fact that you would like the Old Guard to have a larger representation

on the Cabinet than I suggested in my first letter to you, dated the 25th March.

Before I close this letter I shall refer to one or two personal things. You have remarked in one letter that you hope that whatever happens, "our private relations will not suffer." I cherish this hope with all my heart. May I say in this connection that if there is anything in life on which I pride myself, it is this that I am the son of a gentleman and as such I am a gentleman. Deshbandhu Das often used to tell us, "Life is larger than politics." That lesson I have learnt from him. I shall not remain in the political field one single day if by doing so I shall fall from the standards of gentlemanliness which are so deeply ingrained in my mind from infancy and which I feel are in my very blood. I have no means of knowing how you view me as a man, in a way, you have seen so little of me. And my political opponents have carried so many tales against me to you. In recent months, I have come to know that for the last few months I have been the victim of subtle but sinister propaganda carried on against me from mouth to mouth. I would have brought this matter to your notice long ago but I could not get sufficient tangible evidence of what was being said and by whom. Lately, I have come to know much as to what has been said, though I am still in the dark as to who exactly the propagandists are.

Once again I have digressed. In a letter you expressed the hope that in whatever I did, I would "be guided by God." Believe me, Mahatmaji, all these days have been praying for only one thing—viz., for light as to the path that would be best for my country and my country's freedom. I have asked for strength and inspiration to completely efface myself—should the need and occasion arise. It is my firm conviction that a nation can live, only if the individuals composing it be ready to die for its sake whenever it is necessary. This moral (or spiritual) *harakiri* is not an easy thing. But may God grant me the strength to face it whenever the country's interests demand it.

I hope you will maintain your improvement. I am progressing steadily.

With respectful Pranams.

Yours affectionately,  
SUBHAS

*Jealgora, April 7*

IN CONTINUATION TO RAJEN BABU'S TELEPHONIC TALK WITH YOU TODAY, I EARNESTLY BESEECH YOU TO MAKE POSSIBLE OUR MEETING BEFORE LEAVING DELHI FOR RAJKOT. THIS MEANS FOR YOU MAXIMUM THREE DAYS DELAY. OUR CORRESPONDENCE IS NOT LEADING TO SETTLEMENT AND I FEEL PERSONAL TALK WOULD GREATLY FACILITATE MATTERS. REGARDING PLACE OF MEETING IF NOT POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO COME HERE OWING TO REASONS OF HEALTH, I AM PREPARED TO DEFY DOCTORS AND COME TO DELHI AS I DID FOR TRIPURI. I FEEL I MUST DO MY UTMOST FOR SETTLING THE WORKING COMMITTEE PROBLEM AND PRESERVING CONGRESS UNITY EVEN AT THE COST OF HEALTH. IF MATTER IS LEFT UNSETTLED TILL NEXT A.I.C.C. THE SITUATION WILL WORSEN AND SUSPENSE AND DELAY WILL CAUSE FURTHER CONFUSION IN PUBLIC MIND—SUBHAS.

*New Delhi, April 7*

YOUR TELEPHONE MESSAGE. RAJKOT WORK TAKES ME TO RAJKOT TONIGHT. COULD NOT POSTPONE WITHOUT SACRIFICING IMMEDIATE DUTY, BUT THE MOMENT I CAN DISENGAGE MYSELF FROM RAJKOT I SHALL BE AT YOUR DISPOSAL. MEANWHILE I URGE YOU TO ACCEPT MY ADVICE AND FORM YOUR CABINET AND PUBLISH YOUR PROGRAMME. REACHING RAJKOT ON SUNDAY MORNING. LOVE—BAPU.

YOUR WIRE. I AM HELPLESS. I MUST PROCEED TO RAJKOT. I SUGGEST YOUR SENDING SARAT OR OTHER REPRESENTATIVE TO RAJKOT. HE CAN FLY. DO NOT EXPECT RELEASE FROM RAJKOT FOR TEN DAYS. LOVE—BAPU.

*Jealgora,  
April 10*

My dear Mahatmaji,

Apart from telegrams and short letters, I have so far addressed four important letters to you dated the 25th March (posted on the 26th), 29th March, 31st March, and 6th April—dealing with Congress affairs in general and the formation of the Working Committee in particular. I am sorry that the correspondence has been so prolonged and I wish I could have said everything in one long letter. But there were two difficulties in the way—firstly, the strain involved in writing a long and exhaustive letter and secondly, fresh points in your letters which demanded replies from me. I hope that this will be my last letter in this series. Herein, I shall try to clarify some points where I may be open to misunderstanding—recapitulate the principal points in my previous letters and make a final submission and appeal to you.

- (1) Re: Corruption and Violence: If I have understood you correctly, you are opposed to the idea of an ultimatum and early resumption of the national struggle because you feel that there is too much of corruption and the spirit of violence among us. We have been discussing that question of corruption in the Working Committee for several months and I think we are in general agreement on this question—with this difference that I do not think that there is so much of it that we are incapacitated for an early struggle for Purna Swaraj. On the contrary, the longer we shall drift along the path of constitutionalism and the longer our people have a taste of the loaves and fishes of office, the greater will be the possibility of corruption increasing. Further, I may say that I have some personal knowledge of political parties in Europe today and I may claim without any fear of contradiction that judged from the ethical point of view, we are in no way inferior to them and perhaps we are superior in some respects. The spectre of corruption does not therefore appeal to me. Moreover, a call for further sacrifice and suffering in the cause of the country's freedom will be the antidote to corruption and will incidentally expose to the public eye any corrupt person who may have crept into—or gained ascendancy within—our own ranks. To put an analogy, history furnishes instances of astute statesmen launching on a fight with external enemies in order to ward off enemies at home.

Re: The existence of the spirit of violence: I adhere to my previous statement. Within the ranks of Congressmen and of those who are supporters of the Congress, there is, on the whole, less violence to-day than before. I have already given you my arguments for disagreeing with you on this point and need not repeat them. It may be that there is the spirit of violence to-day among the opponents of the Congress, leading to riots which are being forcibly suppressed by Congress Governments. But that is quite a different matter and should not lead us to the view that the spirit of violence has increased among Congressmen or their supporters. Would it not be too much to hold up our fight for Independence till other organisations with which we have no connection whatsoever—for instance, the Muslim League, become non-violent in spirit and in action?

- (2) Re: Pandit Pant's Resolution: I wanted to know whether you approve of the form in which the resolution was moved by Pandit Govinda Ballabh Pant and finally passed, or whether you would have preferred an amended form, more or less on the lines suggested by us, which would have been unanimously passed. I should also like to know whether you regard the resolution as a vote of no-confidence in me. For ready reference I am giving below the original form of the resolution and one of the amended forms.

#### ORIGINAL FORM

In view of various misunderstandings that have arisen in the Congress and the country on account of the controversies in connection with the Presidential Election and after, it is desirable that the Congress should clarify the position and declare its general policy.

- (1) This Congress declares its firm adherence to the fundamental policies which have governed its programme in the past years under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and is definitely of opinion that there should be no break in these policies and they should continue to govern the Congress programme in future. This Congress expresses its confidence in the work of the Working Committee which functioned during the last year and regrets that any aspersions should have been cast against any of its members.
- (2) In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi alone can lead the Congress and the country to victory during such crisis, the Congress regards it as imperative that the Congress executive should command his implicit confidence and requests the President to nominate the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji.

#### AMENDED FORM

In view of various misunderstandings that have arisen in the Congress and the country on account of the controversies in connec-

tion with the Presidential election and after, it is desirable that the Congress should clarify the position and declare its general policy.

- (1) This Congress declares its firm adherence to the fundamental policies which have governed its programme in the past years under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and is definitely of opinion that there should be no break in these policies and that they should continue to govern the Congress programme in future. The Committee expresses its confidence in the work of the Working Committee which functioned during the last year.
- (2) In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year the Congress considers Mahatma Gandhi's guidance and co-operation to be as essential in the future as it was in the past.
- (3) Re: Congress Socialist Party: The remarks in my letter of the 31st March about the Congress Socialist Party were made under the impression I gathered from reports and speculations in the Press at the time. The impression I gathered was that the official leaders of the C. S. P. would continue in their policy of vacillation which might lead to their launching on a new policy in future, viz., supporting the Old Guard. I thought that that might mislead you into thinking that the entire C. S. P. would "cross the floor" and be at the disposal of the Old Guard. Consequently, I wanted to tell you that a large section of the C. S. P. would move with us, in spite of what the top leadership might do. I could say this, because I had heard of the effect of the leaders' neutrality policy at Tripuri on their followers. Some provinces had revolted—as also the rank and file—many of whom had obeyed the leaders' whip only under moral coercion or out of a sense of discipline. Subsequent to my writing to you the information that has reached me does not warrant the impression that I gathered from the Press about the future policy of the official leaders of the C.S.P. and in that event the question of split within the Party need not arise at all.
- (4) Re: Homogeneous vs. Composite Cabinet: I have carefully perused and considered your arguments in this connection, but I remain unconvinced so far. Perhaps you have other arguments also which might help to convince me. Your main point is that we differ so much on fundamentals that

joint action is impossible. At the Haripura Congress you were of the same views as ourselves and till the eve of the Presidential election, joint action was possible. What has happened since then to render it impossible? And what, in your view, are our differences on fundamentals?

I should also like to know whether your objection to a composite Cabinet is based solely on grounds of principle or also on the fifty-fifty proportion, which I suggested in my first letter to you, dated the 25th March. I suggested in that letter that I may suggest seven names and Sardar Patel seven, for your approval. But it is equally possible for you to suggest all the fourteen names if you accept the above proportion. In case you do not accept that proportion and that is a stumbling block in the way of our having an agreed Composite Cabinet, you may kindly let me know, so that I may have an opportunity of reconsidering the matter.

- (5) Advice to Shri Sarat Bose: You wrote in your letter to my brother on the 24th March as follows:—"I therefore suggest either a meeting of all of you so that you can pour out your hearts to one another and come to an understanding, or if the poison has gone too deep to be eradicated, etc. etc." You have not pursued this line in your subsequent letters. I have written to you more than once that on our side we are fully prepared to make a supreme effort to restore unity within the ranks of the Congress. I have said further that on our side there are plenty of people, including myself, who do not regard you as a partisan and who look up to you to bring together the warring elements. I may go further and say that there is no reason why you should regard only the Old Guard and their followers as Gandhiites. You may regard the whole Congress as Gandhiite, if only you accommodate some of our ideas and plans.

- (6) Re: My alternative suggestions:

- (a) My first suggestion is that steps be taken to resume our fight for Independence. In that event, you can demand from us any sacrifice, that you consider necessary, including the surrender of all official positions that we may now have. We pledge our unconditional support in the event of the fight being resumed.

- (b) Should you maintain that it is not possible to resume the struggle and should you like to instal the Old Guard in office—I would suggest your becoming a four-anna Congress member again and assuming direct charge of the Working Committee. That would obviate several difficulties which are bound to continue if you merely put the Old Guard in office again keeping yourself out of the picture.
  - (c) Should this suggestion be also unacceptable to you and you persist in advising me to form a homogeneous Cabinet, then I would request you to give me your vote of confidence till the next Congress. Your vote of confidence will ensure the support of your “orthodox” followers in the A.I.C.C. Thereby a split will be avoided and smooth working will be rendered possible. In this connection, I have humbly reminded you in my last letter of the 6th April that under Pandit Pant’s Resolution, the Working Committee has not only to be formed in accordance with your wishes, but it must be so formed as to enjoy your implicit confidence. Once you take cognisance of this resolution, it is not open to you to advise the formation of a Working Committee which does not enjoy your implicit confidence.
  - (d) Should you reject all the three suggestions, the only course left open will be for you to take the full responsibility of forming the Working Committee—leaving to me to determine my future course of action when you have announced your decision.
- (7) Re: Your silence: You say in one of your letters that you were observing silence because I had requested you to do so. I must explain why I did so. At Tripuri the position was such and the gulf between Congressman and Congressman had so widened that I felt that the only hope of maintaining unity rests in you. I felt then that it was necessary that you should take an impartial and dispassionate view of the entire situation. Supporters of the Pant Resolution were making a rush for New Delhi and I naturally thought that they would try to influence you through a one-sided version of the Tripuri happenings. Consequently, I requested you not to make any public statement or utterance before you had heard the whole story of Tripuri—I mean, the different versions of that story.



I am deeply grateful to you for complying with my request. The result of that has been that the whole country is still looking up to you to somehow save the Congress from civil war and restore unity within our ranks. If unfortunately the time comes—which God forbid—when you will take a partisan view of things, all hopes of unity will be dashed to the ground and in all probability we shall be plunged in civil war.

But I have now begun to feel that I should no longer put this gag on you. Consequently, if you feel that you should end your silence—or if you feel that you have already heard all the versions of the Tripuri story—you are free to make any public statement or utterance that you like. I shall only beg of you to remember what all sections of Congressmen (and not merely the Old Guard) think and expect of you.

In conclusion, I must say that I was greatly disappointed when I got your telegrams from Delhi just before you suddenly left for Rajkot on the 7th instant. Dr. Rajendra Prasad had telephoned to Birla House on my behalf on the 7th morning to inform you how anxious I was to meet you, as I felt that our correspondence was not leading to a solution and a heart-to-heart talk was necessary. Later in the day, my Doctor also telephoned to Birla House and Shri Mahadev Desai, who spoke at the other end, informed him that you would make a desperate attempt to come here and that, in any case, you would not leave Delhi till the next day, i.e. the 8th inst. I am so sorry that Rajkot has taken you away. I can only hope that what will be a blessing for Rajkot may not prove to be a tragedy for the Congress. If Rajkot had not taken you away suddenly in February, the history of the Tripuri Congress would have been written differently. You had the power to save the situation, but you were not available, inspite of repeated requests from the Reception Committee and myself. In fact though the whole country naturally and spontaneously rallied round you when you sent the ultimatum to the Thakore Sahib, a large section of your countrymen thought and still think that you could have postponed the Rajkot struggle by a few weeks without doing any harm to the cause of the Rajkot State people.

(Regarding the award of Sir Maurice Gwyer I would like to draw your attention to the fact that he signed it not in his personal capacity, but as the Chief Justice of India.)

My letter has already become too lengthy and I must stop here. I hope you have stood the journey well and your improvement is maintained. I have been progressing steadily.

With Pranams. -

Yours affectionately,  
SUBHAS

*Rajkot,*  
*April 10, 1939*

My dear Subhas,

Your letter of 6th instant has been redirected here. I suggested a meeting of the foes to have it out among themselves without any reservation. But so much happened since that I do not know if it is worthwhile. They will only swear at one another and bitterness will become more bitter. The gulf is too wide, suspicions too deep. I see no way of closing the ranks. The only way seems to me to recognise the differences and each group work in its own manner.

I feel myself utterly incompetent to bring the warring elements together for joint work. I should hope that they can work out their policies with becoming dignity. If they do so, it will be well with the country.

Pandit Pant's resolution I cannot interpret. The more I study it, the more I dislike it. The framers meant well. But it does not answer the present difficulty. You should, therefore, give it your own interpretation and act accordingly without the slightest hesitation.

I cannot, and will not, impose a Cabinet on you. You must not have one imposed on you, nor can I guarantee approval by A.I.C.C. of your Cabinet, and policy. It would amount to suppression. Let the members exercise their own judgement. If you do not get the vote, lead the opposition till you have converted the majority.

Do you not know that I have stopped C.D. wherever I have influence? Travancore and Jaipur are glaring examples. Even Rajkot I had stopped before I came here. I repeat that I breathe violence in the air. I see no atmosphere for non-violent action.

Is not the lesson of Rampur for you? In my opinion it has done immense injury to the cause. It was, so far as I can see, premeditated. Congressmen are responsible for it, as they were in Rampur of Orissa. Do you not see that we two honestly see the same thing differently and even draw opposite conclusions? How can we meet on the political platform? Let us agree to differ there and let us meet on the social, moral and municipal platforms. I cannot add the economic, for we have discovered our differences on that platform also.

My conviction is that working along our lines in our own way we shall serve the country better than by the different groups seeking to work a common policy and common programme forced out of irreconcilable elements.

I sent you wires from Delhi about my utter inability to go to Dhanbad. Rajkot I dare not neglect.

I am well. Ba is down with malignant malaria. This is the fifth day. I brought her with me when she had already commenced it.

I wish you will conserve your health by taking decisive action, leaving the result to God. Your reference to your father is touching. I had the pleasure of meeting him.

I forget one thing. Nobody put me up against you. What I told you in Segaoon was based on my own personal observations. You are wrong if you think that you have a single personal enemy among the Old Guard.

Love

BAPU

*Jealgora P.O.,  
District Manbhum,  
13th April, 1939*

My dear Mahatmaji,

I thought that my letter of the 10th was going to be the last, but that is not to be. This morning I got up very early and as sleep had forsaken me I began musing over our common problems in the stillness of the morning twilight. Then I went through our whole correspondence again and found that some points needed further clarification.

You said in your letter of the 30th March that at Segaon on the 15th February we had agreed that we had differences on fundamentals. We did discover in the course of our conversation certain differences, but I am not sure that one should regard them as differences on fundamentals. You then mentioned many or most of the points you have now touched in your letters. For instance, you gave out your views on the question of corruption, violence, etc., and you spoke strongly against my idea of ultimatum and struggle for Swaraj, as you felt that the atmosphere for non-violent mass action did not exist. But are these differences of a fundamental character and should they warrant our giving up all hope of joint action? The question of programme is one for the Congress to decide. We can individually put forward our ideas and plans—but it is for the Congress to adopt them or reject them. My main proposition regarding ultimatum and struggle for Swaraj was turned down by the Tripuri Congress, but I make no grievance on that score. Such delays are inherent in democracy. I still believe that I was right and that the Congress will one day realise it and I only hope that it will not be too late then. Now granting that all the above differences exist, why should we not, nevertheless, be able to work together? These differences have not sprung up suddenly to-day. They have existed for some time and have collaborated together in spite of them. These, or similar differences will exist even in future and we shall have to do the same then (viz., collaborate together for the sake of the common cause).

You will kindly remember that at Segaon we talked for nearly an hour solely on the question of composite vs. homogeneous cabinet, but we had to agree to differ. Towards the end of our three-hour talk, I said that I would nevertheless make a last effort to secure the co-operation of Sardar Patel and others when we next meet. Perhaps if I had not fallen ill and if we had met on the occasion of the Working Committee meeting at Wardha on the 22nd February, joint action would have been easier to achieve.

There is another remark in your letter of the 30th March with which I do not agree, but which I did not refer to earlier through oversight. You said in effect that if my policy had the support of the majority in the All-India Congress Committee, I should have a Working Committee composed exclusively of those who believed in that policy. Our viewpoint clearly is that even if we have a majority in the A.I.C.C., we should still have a Composite Cabinet.

because the personnel of the Cabinet should reflect as far as possible the composition of the general body of the Congress and it should command the confidence of as large a majority within the Congress as possible. In the circumstances which face us today in India and abroad the principle of a homogeneous Cabinet for the Congress is, in our view, inherently wrong. This is the time for us to broaden our national front and should we commence doing so by constituting our National Executive—the Working Committee—on a narrow party basis?

On the question of corruption we are in general agreement, except that I feel that you take a somewhat exaggerated view of it. I do not know if taking India as a whole, one could say that there has been an appreciable increase of it. In any case, I do feel that even if there has been an increase, we are not yet incapacitated for a national struggle. And while investigating the cause of corruption we should consider if the suspension of our struggle and the taste of the loaves and fishes of office have not been predominantly contributing factors. And as I said in my last letter, perhaps a call for further sacrifice and suffering will serve as a proper antidote and lift the nation to a higher ethical plane.

Rajen Babu very kindly paid me a visit on the 6th instant. We discussed labour questions of common interest and then turned to Congress affairs. When I first started correspondence with you I had hoped that we would be able to settle the problem of the Working Committee in this way and that the larger problems could be left over for our subsequent meeting. But as our correspondence proceeded, I realised that it was not leading to a solution. By the time Rajen Babu came, I was feeling like making a desperate attempt to meet you, regardless of medical advice, hoping that it might bring us to a settlement. So Rajen Babu at my request, telephoned to Birla House suggesting a meeting. When Rajen Babu did not give me encouraging news, I thought I would try again. So my doctor telephoned to Birla House again in the afternoon and I sent an express telegram—to both of which you replied saying that Rajkot affairs were compelling you to leave Delhi at once. I felt then and I still feel that Rajkot has taken possession of your soul at the cost, and perhaps to the great misfortune of the Indian National Congress. To people like myself, Congress affairs—particularly at the juncture—appear to be a thousand times more important than the call of Rajkot. One should have thought that after

the award of Sir Maurice Gwyer, Sardar Patel would be able to handle the Rajkot situation, without requiring your personal presence there for such a long time. However, it is no use lamenting now, when you have made a decision and have acted in accordance with it.

In one of your telegrams of the 7th April you suggested that my brother Sarat or some other representative could run up or fly to Rajkot and meet you there. I am afraid that this is not a workable proposition. If direct correspondence fails to produce a satisfactory result, what result can talks through a representative bring, when the problem is so difficult and delicate? No, I feel that sending a representative to Rajkot will not improve matters. Only a direct talk between us could have done so.

Your letter of the 10th inst. has just come in and I have to make a few observations on it. I regret to say that your replies to most of the points are disappointing to me. The whole letter breathes the spirit of pessimism which I cannot possibly share. I am afraid also that you have laid too much stress on personal issues. You should have sufficient faith in our patriotism to hope that we shall be able to transcend such issues when a national emergency has arisen. If we cannot restore unity within the Congress, how can we hope for unity in the country.

Regarding the Pant resolution, you have given me practically no advice.

If you feel so hopeless about non-violent mass action in the States also, how do you hope to win civil liberty and responsible government for the States people? After all, our only sanction is non-violent mass action and deprived of it, we have to fall back on a purely moderate policy or your vicarious self-sacrifice. You say that you have stopped civil disobedience wherever you have influence. We know that you did so in Rajkot and there you took the whole burden upon yourself and staked your life for it. Is that fair either to your countrymen or to the Rajkot State people?

Your life is not yours to risk whenever you chose to do so. Your countrymen may legitimately demand your guidance and help in a larger sphere than Rajkot. And so far as the Rajkot people are concerned, if they win their Swaraj not through their own efforts and sacrifices, but through your self-immolation, they will remain politically undeveloped and will not be able to retain the Swaraj which you may win for them. Lastly, when there are so many battles

to be fought and on so many fronts, how often can you stake your precious life in this way?

You have despaired altogether of our collaborating on the political and economic platform. You have added the economic, probably because you disapproved of our idea of industrial planning for India, even though we advocate encouragement of suitable cottage industries along with industrialization. With regard to political differences, I still fail to comprehend what difference you regard as fundamental and as an insurmountable obstacle in the path of unity and joint action. If you still maintain that such action is impossible, then the outlook—at least the immediate outlook—for the Congress is gloomy indeed. I had been hoping all these days that through you the gulf would somehow be bridged and thereby a great national calamity averted.

The irreconcilable elements to which you refer, whether they be good, bad or indifferent, are elements which have come to stay. Consequently if today joint action be impossible, it will be impossible for all time. That means that the future has in store for us nothing but blank despair. With our youthful and robust optimism and our undying faith in India's future, how can we accept such a proposition?

You have suggested in several letters that I should formulate my policy and programme immediately and place them before the A.I.C.C., but I have been commissioned by the Congress to form the Working Committee in a particular way and that is my immediate duty. My programme was placed before the Tripuri Congress in my presidential speech and it was not adopted. At the present moment I do not feel called upon to place a programme before the A.I.C.C. while the issue of the Working Committee remains unsettled.

You said in your first letter that the initiative lies with me. Accordingly I have been placing before you my ideas as well as my solutions of the immediate problems now facing us. I see that all or most of the suggestions put forward by me do not find favour with you. Consequently, it is now time for you to take the initiative and communicate your wishes regarding the personnel of the Working Committee. The Pant Resolution required that the Working Committee should not only be formed according to your wishes but that it should also enjoy your implicit confidence.

I put forward for your consideration some alternative proposals. In the first place, I suggested a resumption of the national struggle

which would automatically solve most of our present difficulties. This suggestion is unacceptable to you. Secondly, I suggested that if I were to form a homogeneous Cabinet according to your advice, you may please give me your vote of confidence. This also you say is not possible. Thirdly, I suggested that you should come forward and assume direct control of the Working Committee which step again would remove many obstacles and obviate many difficulties. You have not replied to this suggestion of mine. If you turn this down as well, then the initiative must pass from my hands to yours and you will have to undertake the responsibility of forming the Working Committee.

One thing is clear in any case. I regret that I cannot possibly give effect to your advice to form a homogeneous Cabinet out of the members of our side. This advice militates against the resolution of the Congress, which provides that the Working Committee must have your implicit confidence. Moreover, in my humble opinion, a homogeneous Cabinet in the present circumstances will be against the best interests of the country. It will not be truly representative of the general body of the Congress and what is more, it will give rise to acute dissensions and possibly civil war among ourselves.

I hope you will now fulfil the task imposed on you by the Tripuri Congress. If you refuse to do even that, what shall I then do? Shall I report the matter to the A.I.C.C., and ask them to elect the Working Committee? Or have you any other advice to give me?

I hope Ba is better now and will soon recover. How is your health and particularly your blood pressure? I am progressing steadily. With respectful Pranams.

Yours affectionately,  
SUBHAS

*P.S.* You have said in your letter under reply (of the 10th inst.) in reply to my request for a vote of confidence from you that the A.I.C.C. should exercise their own judgement in dealing with the Working Committee that I may form, without being burdened by your opinion or mandate. It would be far better to let them exercise their own judgement in the very formation of the Working Committee. If I cannot give effect to your advice, which is also against the terms of the Pant Resolution and if you do not form the Working Committee yourself, then the A.I.C.C. must accept the responsibility



of electing the Working Committee. Can you suggest any other solution?

*Jealgora, 14th April, 1939*

I AM PERTURBED BY PERSISTENT PRESS REPORTS THAT YOURSELF NOT COMING TO CALCUTTA DURING A.I.C.C. MEETING AND GANDHI SEVA SANGH CONFERENCE BEING POSTPONED TILL SECOND WEEK OF MAY. YOUR PRESENCE DURING A.I.C.C. MEETING ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. WILL FIRST WEEK OF MAY FOR A.I.C.C. MEETING SUIT YOU BETTER? KINDLY WIRE—SUBHAS.

*Rajkot, 14th April, 1939*

MINE CROSSED YOUR LETTER. CAN ADD NOTHING HELPFUL. I AM CONVINCED BEST COURSE IN NATIONAL INTEREST FOR YOU IS TO FORM CABINET OF YOUR UNFETTERED CHOICE AND FORMULATE PROGRAMME. LOVE—BAPU.

*Rajkot, 14th April, 1939*

YOUR WIRE. GANDHI SEVA SANGH 3RD MAY TO 10TH. BETTER IF WORKING COMMITTEE 28TH INSTANT, A.I.C.C. 29TH. I SHALL MAKE DESPERATE EFFORT TO ATTEND. BA'S FEVER ABATED. NO DANGER. LOVE—BAPU.

*Jealgora, April 15*

RECEIVED YESTERDAY'S BOTH TELEGRAMS. SORRY DON'T FEEL REASSURED ABOUT YOUR COMING TO CALCUTTA. YOUR PRESENCE DURING A.I.C.C. MEETING ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL. TO SUIT YOUR CONVENIENCE MEETING SHOULD BE POSTPONED IF NECESSARY. REGRET I CANNOT GIVE EFFECT TO YOUR ADVICE REGARDING HOMOGENEOUS CABINET, CONSEQUENTLY ONLY ALTERNATIVE IS FOR YOU TO NOMINATE CABINET. I WROTE TO YOU ON 13TH. I AM WRITING TODAY AGAIN. IF FOR ANY REASON YOU DON'T NOMINATE, THEN MATTER WILL GO BEFORE A.I.C.C. I AM UNDECIDED. BEFORE THAT, WE SHOULD MAKE LAST ATTEMPT AT SETTLEMENT THROUGH PERSONAL TALK. THIS MAY ENTAIL POSTPONEMENT OF A.I.C.C. TO SUIT YOUR CONVENIENCE. KINDLY WIRE AFTER CONSIDERING MY LETTERS OF 13TH AND 15TH. PRANAMS—SUBHAS.

*Jealgora,  
15th April, 1939*

My dear Mahatmaji,

I have wired to you today to say that your presence in Calcutta

at the time of the A.I.C.C. meeting is absolutely necessary. It is so essential that, to suit your convenience, the A.I.C.C. meeting should be postponed if necessary. Kindly let me have definite news that you will be able to come by a particular date. I am told by several friends holding different political views that the Working Committee should be formed before the A.I.C.C. meets. They feel so strongly on this point that they say it is no use for the A.I.C.C. to meet if the W.C. has not already been formed. They hold further that if correspondence does not lead to a settlement, then we should make a last desperate attempt through personal talk. In order to enable us to meet, the A.I.C.C. meeting should be postponed if necessary.

Personally I am afraid of postponement (for I may be accused of dilatoriness) unless you approve of it. But I do feel very strongly that if correspondence does not yield satisfactory results, then we must meet and this meeting should take place before the A.I.C.C. meeting is held. If even personal discussion fails to bring about a settlement, one will at least have the satisfaction of having done his very best.

Let me now summarise the latest position. I am sorry I cannot implement your advice regarding forming a homogeneous Cabinet (I shall not repeat the reasons which I have detailed in my previous letters). Consequently you will have to accept the responsibility which has devolved on you as a result of the Pant Resolution. In other words, you will have to announce the personnel of the Working Committee. If you do that, then the stalemate will end—the W.C. will meet and following the W.C. the A.I.C.C. One can hope that all will then be well and that no other contingency will arise.

If for any reason you decline to form the W.C. then we shall be in a quandary. The matter will have to go before the A.I.C.C. in an undecided state. I think it will be universally held that the W.C. problem should be solved before the A.I.C.C. meets, so that the A.I.C.C. may not become a battleground like Tripuri.

I do not know how exactly your mind is working at present—but I do hope that you will now proceed to announce the personnel of the W.C. and thereby end the deadlock. Should you think otherwise, I would beg of you to visualise the disastrous consequences that will follow in the event of the A.I.C.C. assembling in Calcutta without the problem of the W.C. having been solved. If

such a situation arises, we should meet, if necessary, and postpone the A.I.C.C. meeting so that our meeting may take place.

One thing has struck me presently. We have been discussing a lot about homogeneous Cabinet—but are we sure as to what exactly we mean by homogeneous cabinet? For instance, the Working Committees formed after Lucknow, Faizpur and Haripura Congresses—would you call them homogeneous—then there is no reason to quarrel over the problem of Homogeneous vs. Composite Cabinet. If you call them composite then why cannot a composite Cabinet function this year after successfully working for three years? It strikes me that if we put aside the theoretical discussion of homogeneous and composite Cabinets, we may be able to agree upon names which will in their totality command the general confidence of the A.I.C.C. and of the general body of Congress delegates. Kindly consider this aspect of the problem.

Then again you are deeply concerned over such problems as corruption, violence, etc. Perhaps you regard these questions as fundamental. Now we may differ as to the extent of corruption or degree of the spirit of violence which prevails today. But are we not all agreed that corruption, violence, etc. should cease and necessary steps should be taken on that behalf? If so, why should you think that at the time of action we shall not act together or that in important matters, we shall not agree?

I shall not prolong this letter. I have already unburdened myself to you. I shall only repeat that in all probability, we shall find after personal discussion that whatever our theoretical views on the nature of the Cabinet may be, we shall be able to agree on the actual names—and whatever our theoretical differences on important problems may be, we shall be able to agree where action is called for.

I hope Ba is rapidly improving and that your health is satisfactory despite the heavy strain. I am progressing steadily.

With respectful Pranams.

Yours affectionately,  
SUBHAS

*Rajkot, 17th April, 1939*

YOUR LETTER AND WIRE. PLEASE RETAIN DATE OF MEETING OF A.I.C.C. 28TH.  
SHALL ATTEND. IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO IMPOSE COMMITTEE ON YOU. IF YOU

WILL NOT FORM ONE LET A.I.C.C. DECIDE. COMPOSITE CABINET SEEMS TO ME IMPRACTICABLE. AS YOU HAVE LIFTED THE BAN I SHALL TRY TO ISSUE PUBLIC STATEMENT IF I GET TIME. LOVE—BAPU.

### *Jealgora*

IF YOU ISSUE STATEMENT, KINDLY PERMIT ME TO RELEASE CORRESPONDENCE. MY LAST LETTER POSTED ON 15TH—SUBHAS.

### *Rajkot*

CERTAINLY PUBLISH CORRESPONDENCE WHICH WOULD RENDER STATEMENT UNNECESSARY. LOVE—BAPU.

### *Rajkot, 19th April, 1939*

LEAVING DEFINITELY ON 24TH. REACHING CALCUTTA ON 27TH MORNING. MIGHT STAY AT SODEPUR. HEMPROBHA DEVI HAS ALWAYS INSISTED. DOCTOR ROY HAD ANOTHER SUGGESTION FROM MEDICAL STANDPOINT. SINCE YESTERDAY AM LAID WITH FEVER WHICH IS INCREASING. HOPE IT WILL BE UNDER CONTROL BEFORE DEPARTURE. DESPITE MANY SUGGESTIONS CONTAINED IN YOUR LETTERS, I FEEL HELPLESS, CARRY OUT TERMS OF PANT'S RESOLUTION IN THIS ATMOSPHERE OF MUTUAL DISTRUST, SUSPICIONS AND IN FACE OF MARKED DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN GROUPS. I STILL MAINTAIN YOU SHOULD BOLDLY FORM COMMITTEE. IT WOULD BE UNFAIR TO YOU WITH THE VIEWS YOU HOLD. LOVE—BAPU.

### *Jealgora, 20th April, 1939*

#### I

EXTREMELY HAPPY YOU ARE COMING TO CALCUTTA ON 27TH. NO OBJECTION TO YOUR STAYING WHERE YOU LIKE. FOR YOUR PERSONAL COMFORT AND PUBLIC CONVENIENCE I WOULD SUGGEST YOUR STAYING RIVERSIDE GARDEN HOUSE ON OUTSKIRTS OF CITY. HOWEVER SHALL WIRE YOU AGAIN FROM CALCUTTA AFTER CONSULTING SATIS BABU. JAWAHARLALJI WAS HERE YESTERDAY. WE THINK IT DESIRABLE YOU BREAK JOURNEY FOR ONE DAY AT SOME PLACE NEAR CALCUTTA WHERE BOTH CAN MEET YOU FOR PERSONAL TALK. IF YOU APPROVE IDEA AND WIRE ME YOUR ROUTE, I SHALL ARRANGE YOUR HALT AT CONVENIENT INTER-MEDIATE STATION. PROCEEDING TO CALCUTTA ON 21ST—SUBHAS.

#### II

EXTREMELY ANXIOUS ABOUT YOUR FEVER. PRAY FOR YOUR SPEEDY RECOVERY. JAWAHARLALJI AND MYSELF EARNESTLY HOPE OUR MEETING WILL YIELD FRUITFUL RESULTS AND MAKE POSSIBLE CO-OPERATION OF ALL CONGRESSMEN IN COMMON CAUSE. IN VIEW OF OUR EARLY MEETING IN CALCUTTA WE BOTH CONSIDER IT UNNECESSARY AND UNDESIRABLE TO RELEASE CORRESPONDENCE BEFORE MEETING. PRANAMS—SUBHAS.

*Jealgora P.O.,  
District Manbhum, Bihar,  
20th April, 1939*

My dear Mahatmaji,

I have today sent you the following telegram:

MAHATMA GANDHI, RAJKOT. EXTREMELY ANXIOUS YOUR FEVER, PRAY FOR YOUR SPEEDY RECOVERY. JAWAHARLALJI MYSELF EARNESTLY HOPE OUR MEETING WILL YIELD FRUITFUL RESULTS AND MAKE POSSIBLE CO-OPERATION OF ALL CONGRESSMEN IN COMMON CAUSE. IN VIEW OF OUR EARLY MEETING AT CALCUTTA WE BOTH CONSIDER IT UNNECESSARY AND UNDESIRABLE TO RELEASE CORRESPONDENCE BEFORE MEETING. PRANAMS.

We have had a long correspondence during the last three weeks. This correspondence has not produced any tangible result so far as the formation of the Working Committee is concerned. Nevertheless it has perhaps been useful in a different way in helping the clarification of our ideas. But the immediate issue has to be clinched now, for we cannot do without a Working Committee any longer. The situation within the country and in the international sphere makes it imperative that Congressmen should close up their ranks at once and present a united front. You are fully aware how the international situation is deteriorating from day to day. The amending Bill now before the British Parliament shows that the British Government are preparing to rob the Provincial Governments of whatever power they now possess in the event of a war-emergency arising. From all accounts it should be clear beyond a shadow of doubt that we are approaching a crisis of unprecedented magnitude. We can hope to cope with it only if we sink our differences at once and do our very best to restore unity and discipline within our ranks. This task can be achieved only if you come forward and take the lead. In that event you will find that all of us will do our very best to co-operate with and follow you. You will also find that there is common ground between us so far as the need of rooting out corruption and checking any tendency towards violence are concerned, though we may differ as to the amount of corruption or the degree or spirit of violence that actually exists today. So far as the programme is concerned, it is for the Congress or the A.I.C.C. to define it—though each individual has the undoubted right to place his ideas before these bodies. In the matter of programme, I have the feeling that the crisis that is

soon going to overtake us will largely determine it and then there will be little room for any material differences on this score.

I am looking forward eagerly and most hopefully to our meeting in or near Calcutta before the A.I.C.C. meeting. Opinion in Bengal as in other provinces is rapidly growing that the problem of the Working Committee should be solved by mutual agreement in spite of any theoretical differences and in spite of past differences or misunderstandings. Under the Pant Resolution, the responsibility of forming the Working Committee is yours and when you undertake the responsibility you will find that we shall co-operate to the best of our ability.

Jawahar was here yesterday. We had a long discussion on the present situation. I was glad to find that our views concurred.

We think that it would be desirable to break journey for a day at some station not far from Calcutta and have a quiet discussion. If you come via Nagpur, then Midnapur (Kharagpur) would be the best place. If you come via Cheoki, then we must think of a place near Burdwan. I have sent you a wire on this point and shall await your reply. Failing this, we shall meet in Calcutta. I have asked Jawahar to join in our talks and he has kindly agreed.

I am feeling anxious about your fever. I am praying that it may soon disappear.

With respectful Pranams.

Yours affectionately,  
SUBHAS

*Calcutta, 22nd April, 1939*

DISCUSSED WITH SATIS BABU. APPROVED YOUR STAYING THERE IN QUIET ATMOSPHERE. CONSEQUENTLY UNNECESSARY TO BREAK JOURNEY EN ROUTE. PAPERS SAY YOU ARE COMING VIA DELHI BUT YOUR WIRE SAID VIA NAGPUR. KINDLY WIRE ROUTE—SUBHAS BOSE.

*Note:* In the interval between the above correspondence and the last exchange of telegrams given below, the All-India Congress Committee met in Calcutta on the agreed dates. Netaji submitted his resignation at that meeting; the text of his statement to the A.I.C.C. will be found on page 171. Ed.

*Calcutta, 5th May, 1939*

DESIRE TO RELEASE OUR CORRESPONDENCE. KINDLY WIRE OPINION.—SUBHAS.

*Brindaban (Champaran), 6th May, 1939*

RELEASE CORRESPONDENCE. LOVE—BAPU.

## *Statement on Resignation from Congress Presidentship*

Statement made at the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee held in Calcutta in May, 1939.

Friends, .

You are aware of the resolution that was passed at the Tripuri Congress relating to the formation of the new Working Committee. That resolution was as follows:

“In view of various misunderstandings that have arisen in the Congress and the country on account of the controversies in connection with the Presidential election and after, it is desirable that the All-India Congress Committee should clarify the position and declare its general policy.

“The Committee declares its firm adherence to the fundamental policies of the Congress which have governed its programme in the past years under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and is definitely of opinion that there should be no break in these policies and that they should continue to govern the Congress programme in future. The Committee expresses its confidence in the work of the Working Committee which functioned during the last year and regrets that any aspersions should have been cast against any of its members.

“In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi alone can lead the Congress and the country to victory during such crisis, the committee regards it as imperative that the Congress executive should command his implicit confidence and requests the President to nominate the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji.”

I regret very much that since the Tripuri Congress I have not been able to announce the personnel of the new Working Committee. But this has been due to circumstances beyond my control. Owing to my illness, I could not proceed to meet Mahatma Gandhi. In lieu thereof, I started correspondence with him. This enabled us to



clarify our ideas and viewpoints, but did not bring us to a settlement. When I realised that correspondence had proved ineffective, I wanted to make a frantic effort to meet Mahatmaji at Delhi—but that effort also failed.

After Mahatmaji's arrival in Calcutta we have had prolonged conversations, but unfortunately they did not lead to any solution. Mahatmaji's advice to me is that I should myself form a Working Committee leaving out the members who resigned from the previous Working Committee. This advice I cannot give effect to for several reasons. To mention two of the principal reasons I might say that such a step would be contrary to the directions given in Pantji's resolution, which provides *inter alia* that the Working Committee should be formed in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji and should command his implicit confidence. If I formed such a Committee as advised above, I would not be able to report to you that the Committee commanded his implicit confidence. Moreover, my own conviction is that in view of the critical times that are ahead of us in India and abroad, we should have a composite Cabinet commanding the confidence of the largest number of Congressmen possible and reflecting the composition of the general body of Congressmen.

Since I could not implement Mahatmaji's advice, I could only repeat my request that he should kindly shoulder the responsibility vested in him by the Tripuri Congress and nominate the Working Committee. And I told him that whatever Committee he appointed would be binding on me, since it was my determination to implement Pantji's resolution.

Unfortunately for us Mahatmaji has felt unable to nominate the Working Committee.

As a last step, I tried my best to arrive at an informal solution of the above problem. Mahatmaji told me that the prominent members of the previous Working Committee and myself could put our heads together and see if we could arrive at an agreement. I agreed and we made the attempt. If we had succeeded in coming to a settlement, we would then have come up before the A.I.C.C. for formal ratification of our informal agreement. Unfortunately, though we spent several hours in discussing the matter, we could not arrive at a settlement. I have therefore to report to you with deep regret that I have been unable to announce the personnel of the new Working Committee.

I have been pondering deeply as to what I could do to help the A.I.C.C. in solving the problem that is now placed before it. I feel that my presence as President at this juncture may possibly be a sort of obstacle or handicap in its path—for instance the A.I.C.C. may feel inclined to appoint a Working Committee in which I shall be a misfit. I feel, further, that it may possibly be easier for the A.I.C.C. to settle the matter if it can have a new President. After mature deliberation, therefore, and in an entirely helpful spirit I am placing my resignation in your hands.

The time at my disposal has been very short and hence I could prepare only a brief statement. Nevertheless, this brief statement will, I hope, succeed in clarifying the situation as it now stands. Friends, I shall now request you to elect a Chairman to conduct the proceedings of this house.

### RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S MESSAGE TO NETAJI ON HIS RESIGNATION

*The dignity and forbearance which you have shown in the midst of a most aggravating situation has won my admiration and confidence in your leadership. The same perfect decorum has still to be maintained by Bengal for the sake of her own self-respect and thereby to help to turn your apparent defeat into a permanent victory.*

## Why Forward Bloc

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, August 5, 1939.

The Indian National Congress represents a movement which has sprung from the soil of India. It is the political organ of the Indian people and embodies their hopes, aspirations and ideals. It is an organisation which has unlimited potentialities of growth and development—potentialities which are as limitless as those of the Indian nation itself. The growth and development of the Congress has taken place as the result of an inner urge though it has been stimulated by external factors. It is this inner urge which is primarily responsible for the birth of the Forward Bloc. Neither personal factors nor accidental circumstances can account for this new phenomenon in Indian politics. The Forward Bloc has appeared because the Congress must enter on a new phase in its evolutionary process.

Now, how does this growth and development of the Congress take place? What is the law underlying it? Several theories may be put forward by way of explanation, but the one that appeals to me most and which in my view approximates to reality more than any other—is the Hegelian Dialectic. Progress is neither unilinear, nor is it always peaceful in character. Progress often takes place through conflict.

Out of the conflict between “thesis” and “antithesis,” “Synthesis” is born. This “synthesis” in its turn becomes the “thesis” of the next phase of evolution. This “thesis” throws up an “antithesis” and the conflict is resolved by a further “synthesis.” Thus the wheels of progress move on and on.

Those who in season and out of season talk of unity and appeal for unity under all circumstances and at any price, lose sight of the fundamental law of evolution. We have to distinguish between real unity and false unity—between the unity of action and unity of inaction—between the unity which makes for progress and the unity which brings stagnation. To-day the slogan of “unity at any price and under all circumstances” is a convenient slogan in the

mouths of those who have lost dynamism and revolutionary urge. Let us not be led astray by its fascinating appeal.

In every movement that is living or dynamic, there is a latent left—a latent “antithesis,” if you will. This latent left wing becomes manifest in the fullness of time and through it, further growth and development takes place. To determine how best the left wing could be nurtured under a given set of circumstances requires political, and sometimes philosophical, insight. It often happens that through compromise and co-operation with the right-wing, the left-wing gathers strength and extends its influence. In a different set of circumstances, this may not prove possible. It may then be necessary for the left-wing to differentiate itself from the right and consolidate and expand its strength and following. In such circumstances, a sharp conflict, though painful for the time being, may in reality be conducive to progress and be, in fact, unavoidable. Organisational development invariably necessitates the appearance and growth of a left-wing. Through co-operation with the right or through conflict with it, the left must continue to grow till it succeeds in capturing the organisation or in winning the right over to its side. When this is achieved and the possibilities of the left-wing (now the majority party) are exhausted, history must repeat itself and a new left-wing must emerge and ultimately oust the left-wingers of yesterday. The Gandhites of 1920 were the left wing in the Congress, but it does not follow therefrom that they are the left wing today. The leftists of yesterday often, if not always, become the rightists of to-morrow. To say that there should be no differentiation between right and left within the Congress of today and to argue that this Congress as a whole is left—is talking arrant nonsense. It is time we faced facts—however unpleasant they may be.

Between 1936 and 1938 the left wing of the Congress has grown and developed as a result of co-operation with the right. In September, 1938, the cry was first raised on behalf of the right that co-operation with the left was no longer possible and that the left was becoming too noisy and troublesome to collaborate with. This new cry ultimately reached climax in 1939, when the right-wing deliberately decided to end co-operation with the left. What else is the deeper significance of the present-day insistence of the rightists on a homogeneous Cabinet or Working Committee? For three years they could cooperate with the left, but they cannot do so any more. Why?

Because the right-wing can no longer view with equanimity the growing strength of the left in the Congress.

When the All-India Congress Committee met in Calcutta on the 29th April 1939, to settle this problem of the new Cabinet or Working Committee it was found that the left wanted to cooperate with the right and their slogan was that of a composite or mixed Cabinet. The right, however, were not prepared to cooperate with the left and their slogan was that of a homogeneous Cabinet. Consequently, it was the rightists who ended compromise, cooperation and unity. The right wing today want nothing less than complete surrender on the part of the left. Should the left agree to it on the score of unity? If they do so, what would the consequences be? Would we thereby lubricate the wheels of progress or would we buttress reaction within our ranks?

The right wing having refused co-operation with the left we leftists would be justified in surrendering to them on the plea of unity, only if the right-wing still had a dynamic role to play. But it is unfortunately clear from the correspondence I had with Mahatma Gandhi in March and April last that he no longer thinks in terms of a coming struggle. The Ministers and their guides who now dominate the Congress do not contemplate a struggle either. To surrender to the right under such circumstances and preserve the external facade of unity would in reality amount to perpetuating stagnation and reaction within the Congress. We cannot do so. We should not do so.

The time has therefore come for the left wing to differentiate itself from the right and proceed to consolidate itself. When this is done, the left will secure a majority within the Congress and then proceed to resume the struggle for independence in the name of the Indian National Congress. This is the task of the left wing today. To fulfil this task the Forward Bloc has come into existence.

It was open to the existing leftist parties to accept this role of left consolidation, but for some reason or other, they did not do so. Last year, when the proposal to form a left Bloc was being discussed by left-wing Congressmen—it looked as if the left-wing parties would accept this idea and try to put it into effect. But later on, they changed their mind. It then became indispensably necessary to inaugurate the Forward Bloc with the help of fresh elements from the left. The Forward Bloc is therefore not only the creature of an inner urge within the Congress, but it is also the product of historical necessity. Moreover, the circumstances of the present day

warrant its emergence. Having been born in this manner and under such circumstances, the Forward Bloc cannot die. It is an inevitable phenomenon in our political evolution. It has come to stay and it will grow from strength to strength as the days roll by. Let those who doubt the truth of what I say have patience and watch the future history of the Congress and of the Forward Bloc.

## The Role of Forward Bloc

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, August 12, 1939.

After a number of preliminary skirmishes, the left-wing under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi succeeded in capturing the Indian National Congress in 1920. That was the signal for several of the erstwhile leaders like Messrs. Jinnah, B. C. Pal and B. Chakravarti to walk out of the Congress. The left-wing became the dominant party in the Congress and for a time commanded an overwhelming majority. With the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1922, a rift occurred within the majority party and, over the issue of carrying the fight into the Legislatures, it split into two groups—the Swarajists and the No-changers. After a time the differences were made up through the Congress accepting the Swarajist plan of extending the fighting front to the Legislatures.

With the publication of the Nehru Committee's Report in 1928, in which the majority of the members advocated a Constitution for India based on Dominion Status, a left-wing emerged in the form of the Independence League. At the annual session of the Congress held in Calcutta in December, 1928, the members of the League endeavoured but failed to induce the Congress to alter its creed so that Independence would be declared in unmistakable language to be the goal of the Congress. The opposition to this move came from the main body in the Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi. The conflict with the Independence League went on for a year, till at the Lahore session of the Congress held in December, 1929, the Congress at the instance of Mahatmaji, adopted Independence as its goal.

This compromise enabled all sections in the Congress to join hands and march shoulder to shoulder in the Civil Disobedience Campaign which was launched in 1930.

The suspension of the struggle in 1933 and the adoption of a parliamentary programme by the All-India Congress Committee in 1934 provoked a revolt from the Left. The Congress Socialist Party then came into existence and, thanks to its timely appearance and its

dynamic activity, the drift towards Constitutionalism was checked to a large extent. The Congress Socialist Party soon became the rallying-centre for the Leftist elements in the Congress.

From 1934 to 1937, the Congress Socialist Party made considerable headway both in numbers and influence. But in 1938, at the Haripura Session of the Congress held in February, it was found that the C. S. P. was no longer forging ahead. In my Presidential Address at the Haripura Congress, I observed that the role of the C. S. P. within the Congress should be an anti-imperialist left-wing role and not a Socialist role and only by playing the former role, would it continue to make headway.

Socialist and Communist friends with whom this matter was discussed after the Haripura Congress agreed with this view. It was generally felt that all progressive, radical and anti-imperialist elements in the Congress, who might not be ready to join the Socialist or Communist Party, should be organised on the basis of a common minimum programme. I felt, further, that only by that means could the onslaught of the Right be resisted and the soil prepared for the growth of a Marxist Party.

The Gandhi Seva Sangh, which may be regarded as the "steel frame" of the present majority party (or Gandhi Party) in the Congress, held an important Conference at Delang, in Orissa, in March, 1938. At this Conference the Gandhi Seva Sangh decided to launch an offensive against the Left. The Sangh decided, among other things, to send its agents into the labour field with a view to ousting those trade-unionists who stood for a class-conscious trade-union movement in this country. It decided also to depute its prominent members to capture provincial and other Congress organisations in the country.

The parliamentary programme adopted by the All India Congress Committee in 1934 found its culmination in the acceptance of ministerial office in the provinces in 1937. This enabled the Right-wing to so consolidate its position and strengthen its influence and prestige as to launch an offensive against the Left in 1938. Against this determined attack, the Left could hope to preserve its existence, only if it were consciously organised and disciplined.

If all the progressive, radical and anti-imperialist elements in the Congress had rallied together on the platform of the Congress Socialist Party, then matters would have been greatly simplified. But this did not happen. Because of this, the idea of a Left Bloc



for organising all the left elements on the basis of a common minimum programme was mooted after the Haripura Congress. If the existing Leftist Parties had undertaken the responsibility of developing the Left Bloc (now renamed as the Forward Bloc)—then the task of Left-consolidation would by now have proceeded apace.

But though individuals or groups may fail us, the cause cannot be allowed to suffer to be neglected. Hence the Forward Bloc has been formed with such left elements as are now available. There is no doubt that the Bloc will grow and expand with unprecedented rapidity, despite the many obstacles that beset its path. And the time will soon come when even those who are hesitating to join today, will shake off their vacillation and take plunge. Left-consolidation, winning over the majority in the Congress, and resumption of the national struggle—these represent the three-fold task before the Forward Bloc and before the Left in the Congress. Let those who criticise us or pick holes produce a better alternative. We shall not hesitate to accept it. We are afraid, however, that no other alternative is possible.

The Congress has to be saved from the clutches of the Right which has given up the idea of a struggle and is now thinking in terms of Constitutionalism and Reformism. Only the Left can preserve the revolutionary character of the Congress and bring about an early resumption of the fight for national freedom.

Today, in certain quarters, the word "Socialism" has become cheap. One can even find Socialists in some provinces who are the henchmen of the Ministers. Let us therefore beware of Rightists who masquerade in the cloak of Socialism. What is wanted is deeds not words. Genuine Socialists must play an anti-imperialist left-wing role in their day to day activity. Uttering leftist slogans and making spicy speeches will not suffice by themselves.

Forward Bloc will rally all progressive, radical and anti-imperialist elements in the Congress, whether they be Socialists or not. Through this consolidation, the people will equip themselves for the anti-imperialist struggle that will bring India her birthright of liberty. But the attainment of political Independence will not mean the dissolution of the Bloc. It will only mean a new phase in its life and activity. And that phase will undoubtedly be a Socialist one.

# *Statement on Disciplinary Action*

*August 19, 1939*

I welcome the decision of the Working Committee virtually expelling me from the Congress for three years. This decision is the logical consequence of the process of "Right-consolidation" which has been going on for the last few years and which has been accentuated by the acceptance of ministerial office in the provinces. The action of the Working Committee has served to expose the real character of the present majority party in the Congress and the role they have been playing. The punishment accorded to me is, however, thoroughly justified from their point of view. By trying to warn the country about the continued drift towards Constitutionalism and Reformism, by protesting against resolutions which seek to kill the revolutionary spirit of the Congress, by working for the cause of Left-consolidation and, last but not least, by consistently appealing to the country to prepare for the coming struggle—I have committed a crime for which I have to pay the penalty. The sentence meted out to me may have come as a shock to the vast majority of our countrymen, but not to me. It has appeared as a perfectly logical development in the struggle between Constitutionalism and Mass Struggle and as an inevitable phase in our political evolution. Consequently, I do not find within myself the slightest trace of bitterness or anger. I am only sorry that the Working Committee did not realise that this sort of action should hurt them more than it should hurt me.

To members of the Forward Bloc, to Leftists in general and to the public at large I would appeal to remain calm and collected in face of the above provocation and to continue working with increasing patience and perseverance. What does it matter if I am victimised today? I shall cling to the Congress with even greater devotion than before and shall go on serving the Congress and the country as a servant of the nation. I appeal to my countrymen to come and join the Congress in their millions and to enlist as members of the Forward Bloc. Only by doing so shall we be able to convert the

rank and file in the Congress to our point of view, secure a reversal of the present policy of Constitutionalism and Reformism and resume the national struggle for Independence with the united strength of the Indian people.

In conclusion, I would request the public not to forget that what has happened today is but a repetition of history. Years ago, Left-wingers were once expelled from the Congress, but they came back in large numbers before long and the Congress then had to accept their policy and programme. I feel no doubt in my mind that the cause which we leftists represent is a just cause and it will prosper more through such action on the part of the Working Committee than otherwise. The wonderful response that the Forward Bloc has received from one end of the country to the other makes me feel confident that before long we shall be able to rejuvenate the Congress, restore to it its revolutionary character and role and resume the struggle for Independence in the name of the Indian National Congress.

## *The House of the Nation—‘Mahajati Sadan’*

Speech made by Netaji at the foundation-laying ceremony of ‘Mahajati Sadan’ by Rabindranath Tagore on August 19, 1939.

To-day we assemble here to witness the beginning of the fulfilment of a long-cherished dream. Those who for years have toiled and suffered—laboured and sacrificed—so that India may be free, have long wished for an abode to provide shelter and protection for their activities and to serve as a visible symbol of their hopes and ideals—dreams and aspirations. More than once has the attempt been made to give us the home that we have wanted, but it has failed and it has been left to you to lay the foundation stone of the “House of the Nation.” It is indeed a rare piece of fortune that we have you here in our midst this afternoon to sow with your hands the seed that will bear the fruit with which our nation will be nurtured in the days to come.

On this auspicious occasion we cannot help casting our eyes towards the past and the future of our people. From this soil sprang the movement that was at once the Reformation and the Renaissance of modern India. It was a movement which knew no provincial boundaries and which transcended the national frontier of India as well. Was not the message of Ram Mohan and Ram Krishna—a message for humanity? Was it not the voice of awakened India that spoke through them? We are the heirs of their spiritual and cultural heritage and we are conscious of it.

The liberated soul of Modern India wanted to manifest itself in action, but found itself enchained by the state on the one side and society on the other. Then emerged the movement for the political and social emancipation of the Indian people. For this movement, our soil was not less fertile than it was for the earlier movement—the Reformation and Renaissance of Modern India.

Twenty years of agitation after the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885, ushered in a new era in our political history—the age of self-help and self-reliance, of Swadeshi and Boycott. The

pressure of governmental repression on the one side and of the Partition of Bengal on the other soon broke down the walls of prudence and the maddened youths of India sought inspiration along another path—the path of armed revolt so well-known in history. Before the lapse of a decade, we again entered on a new age—the age of non-violent non-co-operation and Satyagraha (or civil disobedience).

To-day clouds have darkened our political firmament and the Congress stands at one of the crossroads of history. Shall we hark back again to the days of Constitutionalism which we thought we had discarded in 1920? Or shall we continue along the path of mass-movement which ends in mass-struggle? I shall not enter into a controversy. I shall only say this that the awakened masses of India cannot give up the method of self-help and self-reliance, of mass-organization and mass-struggle which has given them the success they have won and which will bring them the greater success that is yet to come. Above all, they cannot give up their birthright of freedom for a sordid bargain with alien Imperialism.

Today our people dream not only of a free India, but also of an Indian State founded on the principles of justice and equality and of a new social and political order which will embody all that we hold noble and sacred. With the voice of eternity, you, Sir, have all along given passionate expression to the hopes and aspirations of our regenerate nation. Yours has been the message of undying youth. You have not only written poetry and produced art—but you have also lived poetry and art. You are not only India's poet but you are also the poet of humanity. Who can understand better than yourself what surges within us today as we assemble to witness the beginning of the fulfilment of a dream? Who else can perform this sacred ceremony for which we have gathered in your presence. Gurudev, we welcome you as the high-priest in today's national festival; proceed to lay with your hands the foundation stone of "Mahajati Sadan." Give us your blessings so that we may be able to make this the "House of the Nation"—the living-centre of all those beneficial activities which will bring about the emancipation of the individual and of the nation, as well as the all-round development of India's manhood and nationhood. Bless us that we may hasten along the path that will lead to India's liberty and to our national self-fulfilment.

## Our Critics

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, August 19, 1939.

Standing as we do for the right of legitimate criticism and believing as we do that healthy criticism is indispensable for growth and development, we welcome the criticisms that have been hurled at the Forward Bloc since its very inception. We have carefully examined them and have endeavoured to profit by them. We have also tried to answer them to the best of our ability. We are gratified to find that, in consequence thereof, several of our erstwhile critics are now our supporters.

But it appears that a certain class of critics are determined not to be satisfied and are going on repeating their charges. Most of them are Rightists, nevertheless among them are to be found men who are generally looked upon as Leftists. It is not difficult to imagine what motives inspire such incorrigible Rightist critics, but it is difficult to understand those who call themselves Leftists, yet seem to find a peculiar pleasure in attacking the Forward Bloc.

In the earlier stages, it was urged that the birth of the Forward Bloc was due to personal factors and factional differences—that the Bloc did not have a positive programme and was in reality an “anti-Bloc”—that the Forward Bloc accepted the Gandhian policy and programme and still wanted to set up a new organisation within the Congress in order to create an unnecessary split and that the Forward Bloc was set up with the sole object of fighting the Congress Working Committee or its inner circle, the Congress High Command. Since the All-India Conference of the Forward Bloc held in Bombay on the 22nd June, such criticisms have been virtually silenced as the principles, policy and programme of the Bloc have been clarified beyond the shadow of a doubt. But criticisms of a different type have been persisting, despite effective replies repeated from many a platform.

These criticisms can be classed under two heads. The burden of one set of criticism is that the Forward Bloc is drawing into its fold Opportunists and Fascists. To accuse the Forward Bloc of opportu-

nism is amusing indeed. A member of the Bloc has to fight on two fronts—British Imperialism and Congress Bureaucratism—and has to suffer persecution at the hands of both. From the personal point of view he has nothing to gain, but everything to lose. The line of least resistance and the path of opportunism, however, takes one straight to the Rightist camp. There you find Congress Ministers who had been openly working against the Congress, till the Congress eschewed Satyagraha (or Civil Disobedience) and took to Parliamentaryism. You find men who never went within miles of a British Jail. You find multi-millionaires who pose as patriots, because they can call themselves Gandhites. You find Congressmen who accept nomination to local bodies through the mercy of Congress Ministers (as in Central Provinces) though acceptance of Government nomination to local bodies was definitely banned by the Congress. And you find Congress Ministers (as in Bombay), making J.P.s by the score in order to rope in more opportunists, though the Congress had long ago advised Congressmen not to become J.P.s or Honorary Magistrates. What are the Zeminders (landlords), industrial magnates and multi-millionaires who now hang about our Congress Ministers, if they are not opportunists? And are not the British-owned newspapers of Bombay and Madras, that have overnight become ministerial organs, blatant and undisguised opportunists? Verily, verily, one can urge and maintain that it is the Rightists and their allies who are the real opportunists.

And referring to our so-called Leftists, may it not be pointed out that, to talk as a Leftist and act as a Rightist—to seek to overthrow Gandhism by words and then succumb to the first Rightist rebuke—to boycott the Working Committee and yet take part in its deliberations—are perhaps brilliant examples of opportunism.

And now about the Fascists. It is difficult to understand what exactly is meant by “fascist” in an Indian context, if the word is used in its scientific or technical sense. Nevertheless, if by “Fascist” is indicated those who call themselves Hitlers, super-Hitlers, or budding Hitlers, then one may say that these specimens of humanity are to be found in the Rightist camp.

The burden of the other set of criticisms is that the Forward Bloc is associating with the anti-Congress elements in the country and will soon break away from the Congress and set up a parallel organisation with their help. Those who intend condemning the Forward Bloc in this indirect manner as an anti-Congress organisation, know

full well that without being a member of the Congress, one cannot be a member of the Bloc and that one has to be a Radical, besides being a Congressman, in order to be a member of the Forward Bloc. Moreover, I have repeated from any number of platforms that in no circumstances are we going to break away from the Congress. Our task is to convert the Congress—not to desert it. Our critics know this as well as we do, but they go on repeating their accusation, hoping that if there is sufficient mud-slinging, some of it will stick in the long run.

It may perhaps be that our critics are jealous of the fact that while their Rightist friends are unable to attract the minorities and other sections of the Indian community to their fold, the Forward Bloc has, from the very beginning, succeeded in winning their sympathy to a large extent. These sections, who are outside the Congress, have comparatively speaking, more faith in the Left-Wing of the Congress than in the Right-Wing. And if they come into the Congress in the near future, it will be a Congress under the aegis of the Left-Wing. This is perhaps because the Left-wing fights for Democracy, stands for a mass-movement and a programme which will benefit the masses, and declares uncompromising hostility to the Federal Scheme.

But this game will not do. You cannot deceive even the Indian public to-day in this way. They are no longer as unsophisticated as you would wish them to be. Consequently, these critics notwithstanding, the Forward Bloc is forging ahead and will continue to forge ahead. The only alternative to Right-consolidation and constitutionalism is the programme of the Forward Bloc. The three-fold task of the Bloc is Left-consolidation, winning over the majority in the Congress to our viewpoint and resumption of the national struggle in the name and with the united strength of the Congress. If you can suggest a better alternative than that offered by the Forward Bloc, by all means do so. We have an open mind and are ready to be convinced. But it is no use indulging in the negative role of a carping critic. That way lie futility and disaster.



## The Need of the Hour

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, August 26, 1939.

As I write, who knows what is happening in Europe? There are reports that Herr Hitler has delivered an ultimatum to Poland. This is quite possible—nay, probable. If this has happened, how is Poland going to react? With the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact staring them in the face, will the freedom-loving Poles fight for their sacred soil? Or will they go the ways of the Czechs? If Marshal Pilsudski had been alive, one could have safely predicted war despite the Non-Aggression Pact and despite the German ultimatum. But the first Marshal of Poland is no more and it remains to be seen how his people will act in his absence. If the Poles had not been as emotional as they actually are, one should have banked on peace based on surrender to Germany. But to-day, no safe forecast is possible, though it is quite on the cards that under diplomatic pressure from Great Britain and France, Poland may finally decide that discretion is the better part of valour.

It would be correct to say that if war broke out between Germany and Poland the sympathy of Indian people would be with the Poles. It would take Germany a lot to convince us that the Polish Corridor or any territory over which there may be war is now inhabited by more Germans than Poles. But so far as Danzig is concerned, the German claim is certainly indisputable and if war breaks out over the issue of Danzig alone, Germany will have an unanswerable case before the bar of world opinion.

Whatever our subjective reactions in this international conflict may be, what are we to do as a nation? Are we to go on cogitating and wrangling while the conflagration spreads from one end of the world to the other? If Russians and Germans, who till yesterday were sworn enemies, can bury the hatchet when confronted with a world-crisis, cannot the two wings of the Congress sink their differences and join hands for leading the nation towards Purna Swaraj? Will non-party "national" Cabinets remain an exclusively European phenomenon? In such emergency, will not Congressmen learn to

discard homogeneous Cabinets and form composite Cabinets instead? The answer to this can be given only by the members of the Congress Working Committee and their mentor, Mahatma Gandhi. The Leftists have always stood for the principle of a composite Cabinet, but they have been ignored so far.

It would be well for all concerned to realise that if the majority party in the Congress and its leaders do not rise to the occasion and give the proper lead to the nation in this critical hour, they would be lending confirmation to the belief that is now widely held that the Right-Wing of the Congress is aiming at a compromise with British Imperialism. Great Britain and her apologists are now talking of self-determination for the Poles and if she goes to war, she will do so with the word "Self-determination" on her lips. Is not this the time to remind our British rulers that east of the Suez Canal there is a land inhabited by an ancient and cultured people who have been deprived of their birth right of liberty and have been groaning under the British yoke? And is not this the time to tell the British people and their Government that those who are slaves at home cannot fight for the freedom of others?

It is time to inform Britain in the simplest language possible that India is not going to allow her resources in men, money and material to be exploited for an imperialist war. The Congress is pledged to war-resistance, though that resistance must necessarily be of a non-violent character. It is therefore not enough to say, as the Working Committee has recently done, that we shall not assist British Imperialism in a war-emergency. We have to go further and reaffirm our resolve to non-violently resist enforced participation in an imperialist war.

The Working Committee has called upon the members of the Central Legislature to abstain from attending the next session of the Central Assembly and the Council of State. This is, of course, better than doing nothing—but it is utterly inadequate. The members of the Central Legislature should resign their seats forthwith as a protest against the war-preparations of the Government of India and should appeal to the electorate for a fresh mandate on this issue. This would stimulate political consciousness among the masses and would make the question of India's participation in war a live issue with even the man in the street.

If war does not break out during the next few days and if the present storm blows over, we should not be so foolish as to think

that the crisis has been finally resolved. International tension may increase once again over the issue of Roumania or the German demand for colonies. Moreover, if Herr Hitler wants a war, he will never suffer from want of a convenient issue. Consequently, we, in India, should realise that the present international tension is a continuous one and we should prepare ourselves accordingly.

In a statement which has appeared in today's papers I have made an offer to Mahatma Gandhi and the Working Committee. I have stated therein that if they adopt a bold policy and take up with the British Government, the issue of India's National Demand, we shall sink all our differences and line up as humble camp followers. And if the need arises, we shall gladly surrender all the posts that we Leftists may now be occupying. We shall anxiously await their answer.

Meanwhile let us tell the British Government in unmistakable language that only a free India can determine what our policy should be in the event of war. War or no war, we demand our freedom and we must have it.

## The Friend's Voice

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, September 2, 1939.

*The Friend of India*—better known as *The Statesman*—has for some time past been writing brilliant articles on foreign policy and the present international situation. It has also been giving estimable advice to the people of India as to how they should behave at this critical juncture. The writer is particularly thankful to *The Friend of India* for the attention and importance it has been pleased to bestow on a small man like himself.

It is strange world that we live in and a world that is changing from hour to hour. Time was when Moscow was a bugbear to our "Friend" and the story was deliberately propagated that Moscow gold was regularly passing into the hands of political malcontents in India. Since the rise of Herr Hitler to power, he has displaced both Stalin and Trotsky, and in recent months, the bogey of Berlin—and along with Berlin, of Rome and Tokyo—has seized our "Friend" and caused it many a sleepless night. Simultaneously, Moscow has become a good boy and Moscow gold been transferred to Berlin, Rome and Tokyo. Our "Friend's" imagination has, of late, begun to conjure up scenes of gold from Berlin-Rome-Tokyo pouring into India and poisoning the minds of the docile and good-natured people of this country. But one wonders what *The Friend of India* will think or say now. Will Moscow remain a good boy or will it fall from favour because of association with vile Berlin after the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact?

"Friend" has made the remarkable discovery—or should one say, invention?—that the moment war breaks out, Indian malcontents will declare for Herr Hitler and line up behind him and the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis. The British people are not particularly reputed for their imagination, but our "Friend" is evidently an exception—for exceptions prove the rule. His theory is interesting indeed and deserves credit.

Since disgruntled Indians will begin shouting "Heil Hitler" as soon as there is war in Europe, "Friend" has recommended capital punish-

ment for them. Failing capital punishment, they should be safely lodged behind prison bars. Then all will be well both in India and Europe. India should certainly be grateful to such a "Friend."

Though these fulminations of *The Friend of India* have afforded us considerable entertainment, we must confess that they have, nevertheless, a sinister significance. This paper often functions as the mouthpiece and apologist of the Government of India and enables us to have a peep into the official mind of Great Britain. What "Friend" has said should not therefore be lightly dismissed as merely a piece of amusement.

In a recent article we are told by "Friend" that the outbreak of war should not mean the postponement of Federation. The journal has, of course, been a consistent advocate of the Federal Scheme as the one thing which will solve the Indian problem. It has been considered necessary to enquire as to what the Indian people themselves think about this solution of their own problem. Perhaps our "Friend" was distressed to hear it being mooted in certain official circles that with the advent of war, the Federal Scheme should automatically stand postponed and this appeared to "Friend" as nothing short of a calamity. Consequently, it has been at pains to convince people that on the contrary, war should expedite the inauguration of Federation. The point that will strike everybody is as to how Federation could be introduced when the Leftists are running up and down the country. This difficulty was previously solved by "Friend" through the suggestion that capital punishment or incarceration should suffice to silence the mischief-mongers and thereby pave the way for the easy advent of the Federal Scheme.

If the above suggestion find favour with the British Government or if they are an indication of the official mind, then what will happen in the event of war is that all the Leftists will be given short shrift by the British Government—not metaphorically but literally. When the coast is found clear, Federation will steam in and will be welcomed by the prospective ministers with drums beating and colours flying—not the colours of the Indian National Congress, but of the British Empire which stands for peace, democracy and progress.

But there is after all, nothing fundamentally new in this scheme. It is just another illustration of the time-worn method of repression-cum-conciliation, with the only difference that this time the method to be adopted is more drastic than before.

Now what have we to say to such a course of treatment? The

patient must, of course, have a say in the matter. In this present case, we might as well tell our "Friend" that if this superb method has failed every time in history, is there much hope that it will go down with the Indian people this time? They are not quite like dumb-driven cattle today and they may refuse to fit into the scheme prepared for them by others. Moreover, one cannot ignore altogether the temperament of the people. A drastic dose of repression applied to one section of the people may not necessarily frighten the rest of the people or another section thereof. It may, indeed, have the opposite effect of making them truculent. In that event, who will welcome Federation with drums and colours? A preliminary treatment of repression may make it impossible for even pro-federationists to a feeling to accept the Federal Scheme, with or without modification, owing to a feeling of revolt in the popular mind.

No, "Friend"! the solution is not so simple as you may think now, or as Lord Willingdon once thought. The Leftists are not such a negligible factor in the country as you would like them to be.

Suppression of the Leftists may be possible, but it may upset your apple-cart also. Thank you for revealing your plans and for forewarning us. We assure you that we, on our part, are prepared for all contingencies and we are confident of winning our liberty, with or without the "Friend's" help.

## Heart Searching

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, October 28, 1939.

In the life of every nation there come occasions when momentous decisions have to be taken which may make or mar its future. It often happens that on such occasions the final decision has to be made by a few individuals or even by one individual. What would have happened to Russia if Lenin had given a different lead in 1917 is today a matter for speculation or conjecture.

How is this tremendous responsibility to be discharged by those who hold the future of their nation in the hollow of their hands? They have naturally to think and to think deeply. They have to look fore and aft—to consider possible alternatives and to weigh the probable consequences. But even then it may be difficult to decide. Not every leader can make a bold and clear decision when face to face with a crisis. But even if one has that capacity, the human intellect may fail to supply us with all the facts and considerations that are necessary for arriving at a definite conclusion.

We are sometimes told that where reason fails, instinct or intuition succeeds. The great heroes of history have felt their way through impenetrable darkness and their decisions, based on instinct or intuition, have been justified by subsequent events.

There is a great deal of truth in this assertion. Within the ken of our limited experience, we have seen leaders make striking decisions in crucial moments, being guided solely by unerring political instinct and such decisions have proved to be correct in the light of subsequent developments. Now what is this elusive instinct or intuition? Is it something mystical—something beyond one's comprehension—something which is inborn? To a certain extent it is inborn. The successful painter or musician has a delicacy of touch and a fineness of perception which cannot be wholly explained by education or training. If he does not start with an innate artistic tendency, he can never reach the heights of artistic excellence. So also in the case of the political fighter. He must have a political sense at the very outset.

But instinct has to be sharpened by training and that training has

to be continuous. If instinct or intuition has served as an unerring guide on half-a-dozen occasions, that is no guarantee that it will always do so. Now what is it that can help to make one's political instinct as faultless as possible?

It is absolutely necessary, in the first place, that one should be perfectly selfless in his pursuit. If instinct is warped by selfish considerations, whether conscious or unconscious, it will not lead—but mislead. And when self dominates instinct, disaster is ahead of us. Consequently, when playing with the destinies of a nation one should endeavour to be as selfless as humanly possible.

Secondly, one should try to merge one's individual consciousness in mass-consciousness—so that the mass-mind may speak through our individual instinct or intuition. This is not an easy thing for the ordinary man. Fortunately, some people can merge their identity more easily in the life of the people than others and they can accordingly have a better understanding of the mass-mind. We know from our own experience that, all things being equal, that leader is more influential, more powerful and more successful, who has a better appreciation of mass-psychology. This appreciation is not possible through reason alone, but requires the help of instinct as well.

It is possible to so discipline and train one's mind that one can be in tune with the mass-mind. But this entails continuous effort and vigilance. Imagine a torrential stream breaking through a mountain gorge. Cannot the drops composing that cataract merge their identity in and put themselves in tune with the stream as a whole? Imagine the e'lan vital of Bergson. Cannot the human spirit plunge into the heart of reality and identify itself with its unceasing flow? Imagine the Absolute Idea of Hegel unfolding itself through a world-process. Cannot the individual merge himself in that evolutionary development and thereby comprehend it? Imagine the "Divine Shakti" manifesting itself in a kaleidoscopic creation. Cannot the human soul seek to attain oneness with it in thought and feeling?

In short, it is possible for the individual mind to put itself in tune with the mass-mind. But this instinctive or intuitive perception may go wrong and may lead us on to the blind alley of mysticism if we are not mentally fortified with a rational understanding of the evolution of the world and of man. We must therefore, in the third place, have a rational understanding—based on analysis, criticism and extensive study—of history. Where reason fails, instinct can



guide us. Where instinct misleads by creating a mystical haze, reason can put us on the right path.

Fourthly, we must have a correct appreciation of international events and developments. We are living in an age when frontiers have, in a way, been obliterated. The world is today one unit. What happens in one corner has far-reaching repercussions throughout our globe. Consequently, even if we are in tune with the mass-mind, even if we have a correct understanding of historical development, we may still go wrong if we lack the international sense.

We are now passing through a most critical period in the history of India and of the world. The All-India Working Committee of the Forward Bloc at its meeting at Wardha on the 8th September and the following days made a momentous decision which was duly conveyed to the Congress Working Committee. Was the decision a correct one? Will it pass the four tests mentioned above? The future alone can give a convincing reply. Meanwhile let us give effect to that decision to the best of our ability. Whatever happens we can certainly claim that we have no other wish, no other desire, but to serve the cause in the best possible manner.

# Glimpses of My Tour

Signed articles in the *Forward Bloc*, October 28—November 25, 1939.

## I

Since the formation of the Forward Bloc early in May, 1939, I have toured, though in a rather hurried manner, practically the whole of British India. During the course of this tour, I have passed through a number of Indian States and have addressed large crowds of States' subjects at wayside stations. It is now time to take stock of what I have seen and learnt during the last few months and draw conclusions therefrom for our future guidance.

At the outset I should say that the events and experience of the last few months have eminently justified the inauguration of the Forward Bloc and nobody can have the shadow of a doubt to-day that the Bloc has come to stay in order to fulfil its historical role. In what follows I shall endeavour to substantiate this statement.

In most places that I visited I had no co-operation for assistance from Congress organisations or Congress leaders. The exceptions to this rule were few indeed. In some places the attitude of the official Congress was one of neutrality or indifference—but in others, there was hostility, open or covert. In Andhra and Tamil Nad Provinces (i.e., Madras Presidency), an appeal was made by the Presidents of the two Provincial Congress Committees asking people to boycott me. Similar public appeals were made elsewhere as well. In other places, as in Gujerat, covert propaganda was carried on and some of my political opponents did not hesitate to calumniate me in the most malicious and unabashed manner. In Patna, provincial sentiment was exploited as far as possible by a group of people and along with shouts of "Long live Gandhiism" shoes and stones were hurled. After the 9th of July incident when disciplinary action was taken against me, I was openly proclaimed a rebel against the Congress. There was variety in the propaganda conducted against me by my

political opponents. Sometimes they would say that I was organising a new party with the help of anti-Congress elements like the Hindu Mahasabha and Dr. Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party. On other occasions they would say I had joined the Muslim League. This type of propaganda one could put up with. But what about that scurrilous propaganda carried on secretly from mouth to mouth by the votaries of truth and Non-violence, against which it was impossible to take action.

In such circumstances and in the face of such obstacles I had to conduct my tour. Moreover, almost all the known leaders, from Mahatma Gandhi downwards, were ranged against me. What credentials I carried with me can be better imagined than described. Nevertheless, from beginning to end, the tour was like a triumphal march. As I moved from province to province, more and more surprises were in store for me. And to-day it is really difficult to say which province gave us the most enthusiastic reception.

When I resigned the Presidentship of the Indian National Congress at the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in Calcutta, on the 29th April, 1939, I took a leap in the dark. Among my co-workers and friends, some approved of it but others considered it a blunder. In making that fateful decision, I was guided in the last resort by my own instinct and political sense. It was, however, a pleasant surprise to discover soon after, that through my resignation I had succeeded in rallying public opinion round us to an unimaginable degree. Bengal, in particular, stood solidly behind us and there the Forward Bloc had the best start possible.

But what about the rest of India? I could find that out only by travelling extensively. My first visit was to the United Provinces—or rather to Unao and Cawnpore. At both places, Forward Bloc had very good reception. Some misunderstanding had been created about the policy and programme of the Bloc by interested parties and through my speeches I was able to remove it. When I left, I felt hopeful that the reaction outside Bengal would be favourable to us.

After U.P.—Punjab. When I alighted at Lahore, there was a seething mass of humanity before me and enthusiastic shouts of "Forward Bloc Zindabad." It was not the Lahore I had visited last year as Congress President. I realised in a trice that Forward Bloc has caught the imagination of the masses. But how did the miracle happen? Who had carried the message of the Bloc to remote

Lahore? No human messenger probably but the cloud messenger of the poet or the time spirit of the historian.

Punjab crowds usually bubble with enthusiasm, but this time I had an overdose of it. I was all the more elated and from there I proceeded to the North West Frontier Province. This was a place I had never visited before and I had no idea whatsoever as to how our Pathan brother would react to the call of the Forward Bloc. One had heard so much of the wonderful hold of the Khan Brothers over the Frontier people that a doubtful frame of mind was but natural in the circumstances. Reports had reached me in Lahore that word had already been sent round on behalf of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan Sahib that the Congress should have nothing to do with me, but I was assured that nevertheless a warm welcome awaited me. As soon as I entered the Frontier Province all doubts vanished. There were huge crowds at wayside stations and Red Shirt Volunteers (or Khudai Khidmatgars) figured conspicuously among them. As we approached Peshawar the crowds began to swell and at Peshawar there was a right royal reception.

I was in Peshawar for hardly a day. But that was enough to assure me that the freedom-loving Pathan could not but be a Forward Blocer in spirit. The public meetings in Peshawar city and in the Cantonment were a great success. The Cantonment authorities had banned our meeting at first, though Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had been allowed to lecture there—but when we resolved to defy the ban, the authorities relented and the order was withdrawn. The discussion I had with Congress workers and sympathisers proved very helpful and we were able to inaugurate the Forward Bloc forthwith. In Mian Akbar Shah Shahib of Nowshera, the Forward Bloc found a doughty fighter and organiser.

After my flying visit to the Frontier Province it was clear that so far as Northern India was concerned, the Forward Bloc could count on enthusiastic public support. It had caught the imagination of the masses and "Forward Bloc Zindabad" was already a mass slogan. But Northern India was not India. The Rightist strongholds were at Bombay, Madras and elsewhere and until they were stormed, no generalised statement could be made for India as a whole. I therefore took the Frontier Mail at Peshawar and went straight to Bombay, where Sjt. K. F. Nariman had been organising the All-India Conference of the Forward Bloc.

## II

In February, 1938, I had visited Bombay as Congress President. Coming straight from the Haripura Congress, I was given a magnificent reception on my arrival. All sections co-operated in the function and that accounted for the unique demonstration. This time (June, 1939) it was different. I was no longer President. I was touring on behalf of the Forward Bloc and was therefore marked down by the Congress High Command as Rebel No. 1. I could not be proclaimed Public Enemy, because Mahatma Gandhi had observed in one of his statements—"After all Subhas Babu is not an enemy of the country."

How would Bombay—the Gandhian stronghold—welcome such a man? What would happen to the All-India Conference of the Forward Bloc which was to meet there on the 22nd and 23rd June? These questions were naturally stirring my mind when I was speeding towards the "Gateway of India." But I was optimistic. The reports from Bombay pointed in that direction. Moreover, the reception I was receiving at the wayside stations, notably at Delhi, Jubbulpore and similar places, enabled me to feel the public pulse. It was not merely the large crowds at the stations that interested me but the exuberant enthusiasm which inspired them, the expression on their faces, the gleam in their eyes. I was not sailing under false colours. They knew exactly under what auspices I was travelling—but they had nevertheless come and come of their own accord. There was hardly any organisation at my back at the time. But the Forward Bloc was undoubtedly the expression of the time-spirit, it was giving vocal expression to the vague feelings, hopes and aspirations which stirred the masses—so it had captured their imagination spontaneously and to such unprecedented degree.

The reception I received in Bombay on arrival did not come up to last year's level, so far as numbers were concerned. But the enthusiasm was very much greater and altogether spontaneous. The attitude of the Congress organisation was one of non-co-operation and perhaps, to some extent, of underground hostility—but that did not have any appreciable effect. The public meeting we had at Azad Maidan was a mammoth one and judging from the applause of the audience, the public were entirely with us. After this big demonstration we had a round of meetings covering every quarter of the city. Many were surprised to find that the meetings in the quarters,

generally regarded as Gandhian strongholds, were attended by large and enthusiastic crowds and it was widely remarked that they were reminiscent of the glorious days of 1930. There was not the slightest doubt that we had captured the imagination of the Bombay public. The Cowasji Jehangir Hall was packed to overflowing by an eager and enthusiastic audience when the All-India Conference of the Forward Bloc met there. In fact, loudspeakers had to be fitted on the street to serve the huge crowd who could not find any room inside. The Conference was attended by delegates from all provinces and with their help and co-operation the constitution and the programme of the Bloc were laid down. Till then the Bloc had been a target for cross-fire. The Rightists would condemn it as a revolt against the Congress. Certain Leftists (or pseudo-Leftists) would malign it as a Gandhian Party in reality, though not in form. A running criticism was carried on the supposed ground that the Bloc did not stand for a definite policy and programme and that it had become a refuge for opportunists and diverse disgruntled elements. When the constitution and programme of the Forward Bloc were adopted and given wide publicity in the press, much of this propaganda—and particularly that part of it which was bona fide—was automatically silenced.

The principal problem which we had to tackle in Bombay was the relation of the newly formed Forward Bloc to existing Leftist Parties and groups. We naturally wanted all Leftists to merge their separate entity in one organisation for the purpose of working an agreed minimum programme. None of the existing Leftist Parties or groups need be dissolved and they may function for the purpose of working any extra programme. Unfortunately, this was not possible. Partly due to mutual distrusts and partly due to other factors, it was not possible to bring about a merger on the basis of an agreed minimum programme. Nor would liberty be given by any Party or Group to its members to join the Forward Bloc individually. Left-consolidation had therefore to be attempted on the assumption that the existing Parties and Groups would maintain their separate identity.

That was the next best alternative and no better solution was possible. So the Left Consolidation Committee was formed. The units comprising it were the Congress Socialist Party, the National Front Group, the Radical League and the newly constituted Forward Bloc. These units would have the same status and the Left Consolidation

Committee would act only when there was unanimous agreement among them.

The device was more effective in practice than it would appear on paper. The Left Consolidation Committee made its presence felt at the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, because there was effective collaboration among all Leftist elements and though they were numerically in a minority, they were able to exert a marked influence on the deliberations of the A.I.C.C. When the A.I.C.C. meeting was over, the L.C.C. met and formulated its future plan of action.

A word about the A.I.C.C. meeting. Though some resolutions were carried on the teeth of Leftist opposition which was in a minority, the organised Left in the A.I.C.C. made a good impression on the visitors' galleries. Leftist leaders, and particularly the leaders of the Forward Bloc, were warmly applauded whenever they rose to speak.

After a successful tour in Bombay, I went to Poona. I was not a stranger there and Poona has never been a Gandhian stronghold. Consequently, I was assured in advance of a warm and enthusiastic response. I met workers from different districts of Maharashtra and addressed a huge meeting in the evening. We were lucky in getting Senapati P. M. Bapat, the renowned leader of Maharashtra, to join the Forward Bloc. After securing his co-operation we were assured of the rapid progress of the Bloc in Maharashtra.

After Maharashtra came Karnatak where I was a perfect stranger. I had no idea as to what was in store for me there. But the actual results surpassed my fondest expectations. And before I left Karnatak a bomb-shell was thrown into Rightist circles, with the announcement that the President of the Karnatak Provincial Congress Committee, Sjt. S. K. Hosmani, M. L. A. (Central), had joined the Forward Bloc. But of this, more in my next.

### III

From Poona I took the night train to Dharwar and Hubli. When morning dawned, I found the train winding its way through mountain scenery at several places. It was wet and chilly—but in spite of it, I felt enchanted by the surrounding countryside. The wayside stations had expectant crowds who demanded short speeches. We went straight to Dharwar where we alighted.

I had a busy programme for Karnatak and I covered the major portion of the province—excluding the Bijapur District—partly by train and partly by car. While the province was new to me, I could not claim personal intimacy with most of our comrades there. Nevertheless, they were exceedingly cordial and enthusiastic. As a matter of fact, the volume of mass support which I found for the Forward Bloc came as a pleasant surprise to me. Along with many outsiders, I was under the impression that since Sjt. Gangadhar Rao Deshpande was the outstanding leader of the Karnatak Congress, the Bloc would not perhaps make much headway there. But, as in other provinces, things had changed beyond recognition there also. Owing to the progress of mass awakening, new forces and new elements had come into our movement. Moreover, other anti-imperialist organisations had come into existence during the last few years. Those who could not keep pace with the march of time, could not adapt themselves to the changing composition of the Congress and could not link up with other anti-imperialist organisations, were gradually being eclipsed by more progressive and dynamic personalities. It appeared to me—and I hope I am not misjudging the situation—that older leaders like G. R. Deshpande, in spite of their past sacrifice and service, were getting out of touch and out of tune with the rising generation who will, after all, make India's future. Many of us are liable to forget that Politics is after all something dynamic and ever-changing. If you rest on your oars and on the strength of your past sacrifice and service, claim a position for yourself for all time, you will surely land yourself in disaster. You will have to move forward all the time if you want to be always in the forefront.

Again and again throughout my all-India tour did I feel how rapidly the composition of the Congress was changing and new anti-imperialist forces were springing up and how quickly the political aspect of India was changing along with them. If this had been equally realised by the older leaders, perhaps our political progress would have been more speedy and simultaneously devoid of internal frictions.

I do not know if it will be generally admitted that the character of a revolution in a country is determined by the nature of the forces opposing and resisting progress and that the latter in turn is determined by the psychology of the leaders and of the existing Government. Where the psychology of the leaders or of the Government is inelastic or static, the obstacles to progress are more formidable



and the reaction to them is consequently more strong and stubborn. There are signs that the opposition within the Congress to further progress is growing from day to day and this should give rise to serious concern in every quarter. If this opposition is somehow removed, then India will march forward with rapid strides and with one sweep will pass through both political and socio-economic phases of her movement. Otherwise much sorrow and suffering will be in store for us.

To come back to our story, beginning at Dharwar I finished my tour at Belgaum. The weather was not altogether favourable. Nevertheless, when we reached Belgaum, there was wild enthusiasm. The educational institutions had all closed down for the day and excitement in the town was at its height. After a mammoth gathering of students I went to the public meeting. It was raining cats and dogs but the huge concourse though drenched to the skin, despite umbrellas, hardly moved. It was a sight that could not but thrill a living soul.

As far as my recollection goes, the meeting was presided over by Sjt. S. K. Hosmani, President of the Karnatak Provincial Congress Committee and member of the Central Assembly. In any case, I clearly remember that he was sitting at my side. After the function, we had a closed-door conference of the sympathisers of the Bloc which Sjt. S. K. Hosmani attended. He was unanimously offered the Presidentship of the Provincial Organising Committee of the Bloc which he kindly accepted. The news came as a bomb-shell to Rightist circles in the province who had never expected that a sane, sober, prudent and elderly person like Sjt. Hosmani would join a group of "rebels" like the Forward Bloc. Most interesting was the remark he made to me to the effect that if disciplinary action was taken against the President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, then another President was needed to stand by him. Besides Sjt. Hosmani, we found enthusiastic workers in Sjt. Mandgi and Sjt. Idgunji.

From Karnatak I returned to Bombay via Poona. On reaching Bombay I found that a storm had broken out over my statement on the Prohibition Scheme of the Bombay Government, which I had issued early in July when I left for my Poona and Maharashtra tour. My statement had been misrepresented in certain circles and political capital was being made out of it. Some hostile papers did not have the decency to publish the whole of it before proceeding to attack me. Since its inception the Forward Bloc had been making such headway

that it had caused consternation in certain circles. How were they to arrest its progress—was the question. My statement on the Prohibition Scheme gave them a convenient stick to beat me with.

#### IV

From Karnatak the scene shifts to Gujerat but before I invite the reader thither, I have to indulge in a digression. Early in July, before leaving Bombay for Maharashtra and Karnatak, I ran up to Jubbulpore on a flying visit. A conference had been organised there by our sympathisers and supporters and that was the occasion for my going there—the real object being to popularise the Forward Bloc in Mahakoshala Province (i.e. C. P. Hindustani Province.) On that occasion, there was something like a rally of Forward Blocers from different districts of Mahakoshala and we were able to make a good start with our organisation there.

I had been to Jubbulpore in 1932 but only as a prisoner and I had lived in Jubbulpore Jail for some months. My next visit there was in the capacity of Congress President, but I went to the Tripuri (near Jubbulpore) Congress as an invalid and returned as such. As a matter of fact, I had to be carried on a stretcher and in an ambulance car and saw practically nothing of Jubbulpore or Tripuri or the Tripuri Congress. I was only informed by friends that the Presidential procession was a magnificent affair and my absence was keenly felt by the multitude from the surrounding countryside. But it was one thing to go as a Congress President and with all the halo that surrounds him. But it was quite a different proposition to go as a mere Congressman and with the label of a rebel against the Congress High Command. Till then I had not done anything which could be stigmatised as an act of rebellion—I had simply resigned the Congress Presidentship and joined the Forward Bloc. Nevertheless, in official Congress circles it was regarded as a revolt and proclaimed as such. Jubbulpore was the first place I visited after the All-India Conference of the Forward Bloc and consequently there was an added significance in my experience there.

As soon as my train steamed into the Central Province I realised what sort of welcome I would have there. There were crowds—enthusiastic crowds—at the wayside stations and it was clear that the stigma given by the official leaders of the Congress had not affected

them in the least. The slogan "Forward Bloc Zindabad" (Long live Forward Bloc) was vociferously shouted everywhere and when we reached Jubbulpore, there was a seething mass of humanity. All doubts were set at rest.

There was no procession from the station, but it had been fixed for a later hour. Ordinarily I disliked processions immensely—they are a waste of time and often cause considerable strain and discomfort, especially in the day-time. But in another sense they are useful. They afford us a peep into mass psychology and with all my political preoccupations, I have not been able to abandon my interest in Psychology or in Philosophy. Perched on a throne-like chair in a lorry or on the hood of a car or in a gaily decorated horse-drawn vehicle, one has a rare opportunity of watching crowds of men and women and studying their psychology. No doubt perhaps a doll in a showcase would, if imbued with life. Nevertheless, at times the experience is worth having.

And so it was in the case of Jubbulpore. The mammoth procession revealed in an unmistakable manner the affection of the crowds and their spontaneous response to the cause I was advocating. The public meeting was also an undoubted success and according to local friends, both the procession and the meeting were on a par with the best records of Jubbulpore.

Not less important than these demonstrations was the small closed-door Conference of workers from different districts of the province. A skeleton organisation was set up there and we had the satisfaction of leaving behind something permanent. From Jubbulpore I paid a hasty visit to Mandla by car. There, under the scorching midday sun of May, was a large and expectant crowd. It was perhaps midsummer madness to wait under the scorching sun for hours to hear a rebel, but there was something noble, something sacred in this type of madness which makes one oblivious to sun or rain.

Coming back to Bombay from Jubbulpore I found once again eager crowds at intermediate stations where short speeches had to be made. I could not help regretting that the visit to Mahakoshala had to be so short.

On reaching Bombay on the 7th June a surprise was in store for me. This was the statement of the Congress President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, virtually banning the All-India demonstrations we had planned for the 9th July. As the reader will remember, the All-India Congress Committee which had met in Bombay towards the end of

June had passed two resolutions to which we Leftists had taken serious exception. One of them had prohibited Congressmen from offering Satyagraha or Civil Disobedience without the previous sanctions of the Provincial Congress Committee, while the other had made the Congress Ministries in the Province virtually independent of the Provincial Congress Committee concerned. In the view of the Leftists, these resolutions were calculated to strengthen the position of the Rightists and to take the Congress away from the path of mass struggle and it was consequently felt desirable and necessary to voice our protest against them. The observance of an All-India Day on the 9th July for this purpose had accordingly been decided on by the Left-Consolidation Committee—and not by the Forward Bloc alone.

Behind the statement of Dr. Rajendra Prasad was the veiled threat of disciplinary action and nobody could miss it. As soon as I read the statement, it appeared necessary to convene a meeting of Left-Consolidation Committee to consider it. Representatives of the Socialist Party, National Front Group, Radical League and Forward Bloc, accordingly met and considered the statement and reviewed the general situation. We found no reason to alter our previous decision. Arrangements were therefore set on foot for a proper observance in Bombay.

An attempt was thereafter made by Mr. M. N. Roy to countermand this decision on behalf of the Radical League and also to influence the Congress Socialist Party to that end, through the medium of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru—but in Bombay, as in most places in India, the demonstration was held under the joint auspices of the above four organisations and of the Kishan Sabha.

This was the first open clash between the Left and Right after the formation of the Left-Consolidation Committee and people in Bombay were exceedingly curious and anxious to see how the general public would respond to the call of the Left. There were also vague rumours of the supporters of the Rightists coming to break up our meetings. But nothing untoward happened. All the meetings held in Bombay were eminently successful. I attended the one at the Franji Cowasji Hall which was packed to its fullest capacity, with a large overflow of crowd waiting outside. The enthusiasm of the public was at its highest pitch.

So we crossed the first hurdle.

## Looking Back

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, November 4, 1939.

Last week we tried to do a bit of heart-searching. This week we shall attempt to look back and take stock of the changes on the political chess-board since last year. We shall then endeavour to dive into the future and to comprehend the role we have yet to play.

It will be remembered that at the annual session of the Indian National Congress held at Haripura in February, 1938, the most important resolution adopted was that pertaining to the Federal Scheme embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935. The policy enunciated therein was one of uncompromising hostility to the proposed Federation. At that time it was seriously apprehended that the British Government would force Federation down our unwilling throats and the extraordinary interest evinced by H. E. the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, in the Federal Scheme lent colour to this apprehension. As the months rolled by, many of us began to feel that the acceptance of ministerial office in the provinces had begun to demoralise a section of Congressmen by engendering a purely constitutionalist mentality in them. Simultaneously, one began to get reports of insidious attempts being made by the agents of the British Government to canvass support for the Federal Scheme either in its original form or with certain modifications. Consequently, in July, 1938, I felt constrained to draw public attention to the danger of a compromise with British Imperialism over that Scheme. I added that I felt so strongly over that issue that if by any chance the Congress by a majority approved of a compromise over the Federal Scheme, I would deem it my duty to resign the Presidentship of the Congress and initiate a campaign against it. This statement caused annoyance in Gandhian circles—not so much because of my strong views on Federation, but because of the clear hint given therein that a decision by a majority over such an all-important problem would not necessarily gag the minority or reduce it to inaction. This was perhaps the beginning of the storm that was subsequently to break out. It appeared strange to me that while no

annoyance or embarrassment was caused in Gandhian circles by the utterances of certain Rightist Congressmen openly advocating acceptance of a modified Federal Scheme in defiance of the Congress policy of uncompromising opposition, my statement which was more in line with that policy was regarded with disfavour and annoyance. As a matter of fact, we Leftists could not help noticing that in spite of the clear and unequivocal stand taken by the Congress on the issue of Federation, which was the burning problem of the day, a strenuous campaign against it was never launched by any of the Rightist leaders.

In October, 1938, at a Conference of Congress Ministers of Industries held at Delhi and presided over by myself, it was unanimously decided to appoint a National Planning Committee. Though several prominent members of the Congress Working Committee, including the General Secretary, were present there and no one struck a discordant note, circles in close touch with Mahatma Gandhi disapproved of this step and regarded the National Planning Committee as a menace to the aims and objects of the Village Industries Association which was a creation of Mahatma Gandhi. Some went so far as to opine that the National Planning Committee would undo the lifework of the Mahatma. Another item was thereupon added in the charge-sheet against me.

Since my July pronouncement on Federation the political situation in India and abroad was undergoing a change and many of us began to feel that Federation was no longer an immediate danger for our people. It was quite on the cards that the British Government would in its own interest shelve Federation for a number of years till the international tension was eased. Thereby the Government would lose nothing. From their standpoint, Provincial autonomy was working satisfactorily and at the Centre, the old autocratic Government was also running smoothly. If the inauguration of Federation meant popular resistance and perhaps a Civil Disobedience Movement at a time when the international horizon was so clouded, the Government would in fact stand to gain by postponing Federation. The problem for India then would be as to what we should do if the postponement did really take place.

I mooted this question publicly in November last year when I toured a part of the United Provinces and the Punjab. I declared emphatically that if the British Government chose to shelve the Federal Scheme, we could not postpone the national struggle till

the day when Federation would once again become a live issue. We should raise the issue of India's National Demand ourselves—give the British Government time to reply to it—and meanwhile prepare for the eventuality that the Demand may at first be turned down. The mass response to this suggestion was enthusiastic but it did not move the Rightist leaders at all and later on, was even ridiculed by them. Nevertheless, the Bengal Provincial Conference at its annual session at Jalpaiguri in February, 1939, adopted a resolution on these lines and a certain amount of propaganda was carried on with a view to popularising it.

Towards the end of January, 1939, the election of the Congress President for the year took place. The decision to offer myself for re-election was an act of dare devilry, the majority of Congressmen being of the view that the chances of success were remote. My justification for standing was the belief that by doing so I would strengthen the anti-Federationist cause, no matter what the result of the contest might be. There is no doubt that the result while it brought disappointment to the Rightists, sent a thrill of joy and self-confidence to all Leftists in the country. "Federation is now as dead as a door-nail"—was the universal comment on my re-election. "The work of twenty years has been undone overnight"—was the remark at Wardha.

But the Gandhians<sup>1</sup> were not to be discomfited so easily. Mahatma Gandhi was stirred to activity, proclaiming to the world (and quite wrongly, in my humble opinion) that Dr. Pattabhi's defeat was his own defeat. The Party machinery set to work with full force and preparations were made for a battle royal at the annual session of the Congress which was to meet at Tripuri in March last.

In my Presidential speech at Tripuri I pleaded for a bold policy including the presentation of India's National Demand to the British Government, fixation of a time-limit of six months for a reply and preparation for all eventualities during the intervening period. My suggestions received scant attention. The question of Swaraj receded to the background and the one thought and endeavour of the Gandhites was to avenge their defeat at the Presidential election, about which they were optimistic, having won over Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the meantime. They succeeded, but at what cost to the national cause, we can now realise.

<sup>1</sup>The terms Gandhian and Rightist are interchangeable when we talk of Congressmen.

After the Tripuri Congress the All-India Congress Committee met at Calcutta towards the end of April last. The main problem before that Committee was the formation of the Working Committee (or Cabinet) of Congress. As the public already know, when I was not allowed to have a composite Cabinet consisting of both Rightists and Leftists with the inclusion of some fresh blood, I resigned. Till then the Left-movement in the country was being conducted on the basis of co-operation with the Right. At Calcutta, the latter definitely took the stand that a composite Cabinet was unworkable and that co-operation between the Left and Right Wings was no longer possible. There were then but two courses open to us—either to surrender to the Right or to stand on our own legs and organise the Left. I chose the latter course.

But why? It was clear from the correspondence I had with Mahatma Gandhi after the Tripuri Congress that there was no hope of the Right Wing leading a national struggle. Consequently, a surrender to the Right-Wing meant a surrender to constitutionalism and to compromise with British Imperialism. My final submission to the Mahatma was that if he would stand for a struggle, we would sink our differences and line up behind him. His reply disappointed us and the Forward Bloc had to be launched.

The three-fold task of the Forward Bloc was: (1) Left-consolidation, (2) Establishment of real and effective unity within the Congress, and (3) Resumption of the National Struggle in the name of the Congress. This three-fold task was popularised by us throughout the country. But we were charged with creating disruption and split. The fact was that the real disruptors were the Rightists who refused to co-operate with the Leftists and thereby forced them to attempt Left-Consolidation in isolation from the Right.

Left-consolidation was the natural antithesis to Right-consolidation which had been going on for the last two years. There was no objection to Right-consolidation and no voice was raised when the Gandhi Seva Sangha was transformed into a political party. But when the Forward Bloc was formed and Left-consolidation was attempted the cry of disruption and disunity was raised.

According to the Forward Bloc, the existing programme of the Congress in so far as it is beneficial to the national cause, has to be worked with a dynamic spirit. Over and above that, a supplementary programme is needed to prepare the country for all eventualities. And in order to work either programme, a fighting mentality



is essentially necessary instead of a constitutionalist mentality. It is one's mentality which supplies the motive-power to all his activities.

Various criticisms have been made against the Forward Bloc and its programmes—some genuine and some malafide. Now, no human institution can claim infallibility. Hence, the Forward Bloc cannot be free from shortcomings either. But the point is—has any better alternative or substitute been suggested whereby we can attain our national objective most speedily and with the minimum sacrifice? If such an alternative be proposed, we shall gladly accept it. After all, the Forward Bloc is for the Cause and not the Cause for the Forward Bloc. But we are afraid no better substitute can be offered.

Looking back on past events, one cannot help observing how different things would have been to-day if our suggestions of the past had been duly accepted and given effect to. Six months after the Tripuri Congress, war broke out in Europe and India was dragged into it. The whole world had prepared for the crisis which has overtaken us, but not the Indian National Congress. Such incompetent leadership can rarely be found anywhere in the world.

Even after the outbreak of war, leaders have been cogitating and cogitating. There is hesitation, vacillation and weakness at every step. The resolution of the Haripura and Tripuri Congress have been forgotten. If they had not been, then we would have seen—not hesitation and inaction, but decision and action.

Have we yet to realise that pilgrimages to New Delhi will not bring us to our goal? The key to Swaraj will not be found there but in our own souls.

But if you needs must cogitate, then consider for a moment what the situation would have been to-day if the legacy of the late Vithal-bhai Patel of revered memory had been properly utilised and India had set up unofficial embassies throughout the world. But perhaps to some people, more important than Swaraj is the drive against the Left and the vendetta against certain individuals.

## Whither High Command?

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, November 18, 1939.

Ever since the beginning of September, members of the public who usually look to the Congress for light and lead have been passing through mental bewilderment and confusion. The Resolution of the Haripura Congress on War had formerly been regarded as an unerring guide and the natural expectation was that as soon as the crisis broke out, steps would be taken to implement it forthwith. But this did not happen. At first there was delay. This was followed by vague murmurings in Rightist circles to the effect that altered circumstances rendered that Resolution inoperative. The result was vacillation and comparative inaction.

Surprise and bewilderment gave place to utter confusion. One can easily imagine the mental condition of those who had got into the habit of taking marching orders from the Congress. What were they to do? The Haripura Resolution which should have served as their objective guide, was unceremoniously shelved and no substitute was given. No doubt in September the Congress Working Committee produced a long-winded resolution which some of our international experts (?) hailed "as a lead to the whole world" or as "a charter of liberty for subject races"—but analysis of that resolution did not reveal much more than mere words. And in the midst of verbiage, the kernel was missing. What was the Congress going to do if the reply of the British Government on the questions of War-Aims and of India's political future was inadequate and unsatisfactory?

The heroic language of the resolution naturally led the unsophisticated reader to expect heroic deeds. But were the intentions of the authors equally heroic? In Rightist circles there were high hopes that a satisfactory response would come and a crisis would thereby be averted. One fails to understand, however, what justification there was for entertaining such hopes. Nobody claiming political sense should have felt optimistic in the given circumstances. The fact, nevertheless, was that there was considerable optimism which

was dashed to the ground when the Viceroy's pronouncement was made in October. The statements of some of our Ministers contained a note of wail and afforded distressing reading.

For once there was prompt action. The Viceroy's statement evoked a ready response from the Congress Working Committee and our Ministers were instructed to vacate office. Though we hold a different view as to the manner in which this should have been done, there cannot be the slightest doubt that ministerial resignation was an act worthy of an organisation that had to vindicate the honour of a nation. It was the very least that the Congress could do, but it was not all that it should do.

The Viceroy's statement had disappointed and surprised our friends on the Right. It was now the turn of the Viceroy and of the British Government to feel likewise over the resignation of the Congress Ministries. It is a moot question as to why ministerial resignation should have caused disappointment and surprise in Governmental circles and why, on the contrary, it was not regarded as an inevitable corollary. Whatever the answer to that question may be, the facts of the case are perfectly clear. It can be surmised, however, that a combination of factors had induced the British Government to think that the Congress would not show fight. The statement of Mahatma Gandhi early in September revealing an attitude of unconditional co-operation towards the Government, the feeling in Rightist and particularly in Ministerialist circles, the absence of preparation in Congress Committee dominated by Rightists—these and other factors could have but one meaning and significance and it was natural for the authorities at Delhi and at Whitehall to infer that all would be quiet on the Congress Front. This inference was legitimate but it contained one piece of miscalculation. The Congress was neither a static nor an utterly homogeneous body. It was, therefore, possible for elements within the Congress to bring their influence to bear on it and produce results which might appear to the outsider as a deviation from the official course or at least as a development wholly unexpected.

By the man in the street, ministerial resignation when viewed against the present national and international background, could not possibly be regarded as an isolated phenomenon. He has, therefore, been expecting this act to be followed to its logical conclusion—in accordance with his commonsense, 'native' logic. Transcendental logic—if we may use that expression—will not make him change his

mind and this elementary fact should be grasped by the Congress Working Committee if it does not desire to betray India's cause at this critical juncture. All the excuses and extenuating considerations that may now be put forward in the name of prudence or caution or even Truth and Non-violence, will not weaken in the least possible degree the popular demand that however badly circumstanced we may be to-day, honour and self-interest alike demand that the Congress should march forward towards its goal. This elemental demand of the nation's soul can be ignored only at our own peril.

A forward policy and move as desired by the people has been consistently resisted by Mahatma Gandhi for the last twelve months or more. Stock arguments advanced in support of his view have been mainly two—firstly, the existence of corruption within the Congress and secondly, the inevitability of the outbreak of violence in the event of a national struggle being launched. We have often urged in the past that these arguments are of questionable validity and that in no case can they be used as an excuse for applying the brake to our forward march.

Since the beginning of September, the above arguments have been reinforced by a third one—viz., that the launching of civil disobedience will be followed by Hindu-Muslim riots, etc. A more worthless or erroneous argument cannot possibly be conceived. The Hindus and Muslims against whom such a serious reflection is made will, we have no doubt, emphatically repudiate such a charge. According to our understanding and information, a forward move on behalf of the Congress will appreciably improve the present inter-communal relations and bring the two parties nearer to each other than ever before.

If you are not prepared for a forward move, why not say so frankly and without equivocation? Why cloud the issue by advancing arguments that will not hold water?

The position of the Left is perfectly clear and has been reiterated times without number. If the Congress Working Committee does not move forward, we shall do so. No threat hurled either by Mahatma Gandhi or by the Working Committee will deter. And if they resist us, we shall boldly face such resistance.

But if the Working Committee rises to the occasion, we shall be with it like loyal soldiers. Differences will be sunk within one moment and the Congress ranks will appear as one solid phalanx arrayed against the forces of Imperialism and Reaction.

## Whom They Fight?

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, November 25, 1939.

As I glanced through this morning's papers, certain incongruous things struck my eye. On the first page—and perhaps in order of importance—comes the resolution on the Congress attitude towards the British Government. Then follows the time-table of the Ramgarh Congress. Thereafter we come across a lengthy resolution on the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.

The most significant sentence in the first resolution is as follows: "The Working Committee will continue to explore all means of arriving at an honourable settlement, even though the British Government has banged the door in the face of the Congress," which when paraphrased should read: "We shall continue to lick the feet of the British Government even though we have been kicked by them."

This is not Politics as we understand it or as the modern world understands it—but perhaps it is in accordance with Biblical or Vaishnavic traditions. Such a policy may appeal to one or to a few persons—but will it be acceptable to the nation that is more interested in freedom, which is a life-and-death question, than in the whims of individuals? It remains to be seen if the Indian people will repudiate a policy that demands that we should lick the feet that kick us.

In the same resolution appears the following: "The Working Committee desire to make it clear that the true test of preparedness for Civil Disobedience lies in Congressmen themselves spinning and promoting the cause of Khadi to the exclusion of mill-cloth and deeming it their duty to establish harmony between the Communities by personal acts of service to those other than members of their own community and individual Hindu Congressmen seeking an occasion for fraternising with Harijans as often as possible. The Congress organisations and Congressmen should, therefore, prepare for future action by promoting this programme. . . ."

When we came to this part of the resolution, we rubbed and

rubbed our eyes and once again glanced at the date of the paper—November 24, 1939. So in the year of grace 1939, a political party of the stature and importance of the Indian National Congress can put forward such a wonderful plan for preparing the country for Direct Action. There is no reference to enlistment of volunteers—no talk of cadres for a programme of Direct Action. There is no appeal to one's higher self which can send a thrill through his nerves and steel him for suffering and persecution. There is not a word about collection of funds either, which are the sinews of war, whether violent or non-violent. There is no direction, either, to wind up other unimportant affairs and clear the decks for action. We are told instead that the preparations for the Ramgarh Congress, including the election of delegates, Presidential election, etc. are to go on apace—as if nothing has happened or is to happen. But the Indian people are no longer as politically ignorant or unsophisticated today as they were some time back. Does not even a child know today that in a war emergency, the first step to be taken by any Government or Party is to postpone elections *sine die*?

Against this background stand in bold relief the statements issued from time to time by prominent members of the Working Committee, including Dr. Rajendra Prasad, to the effect that they hope and trust that it will soon be possible for the Congress Ministers to go back to office. What longing, tearful eyes they must still have to continue thinking of the vacant chair in such an atmosphere and in the midst of such an emergency. One wonders if they are losing all sense of national self-respect. And one is surprised and pained beyond measure to be reminded that in the midst of this tragic scene stands the long figure of the ex-revolutionary, ex-Leftist leader of India who had once emphatically declared to a worshipping world that in no circumstances would he accept a seat on a homogeneous Cabinet, whether of the Right or of the Left. Who can tell us if this solemn declaration could be reconciled with his present stand—his complete identification with the Rightist elements in the Congress and his complete disavowal of the Left-movement in the country?

Let us therefore be perfectly plain and brutally frank, despite the danger of treading on others' corns. Nothing will be gained by mincing matters in this fateful hour of our national history. Such resolutions of the Working Committee are mere verbosity, calculated to hoodwink and bluff the innocent people of this country. Mahatma Gandhi has been consistently telling us for a year or more that a

national struggle is out of the question and that the country is not prepared for it—though it is a moot question as to who is not prepared, the country or the shining lights of the Working Committee. If the Mahatma had stood for a struggle from the beginning, much of the present controversy and dispute between the Right and the Left would not have arisen at all. Consequently, it would be futile to hope that at this late hour he will go back on all that he has said and all that he has stood for, during the last twelve months. Pressure of events and the force of public opinion may make him do a lot, but they cannot induce him to launch a nation-wide struggle. It is one thing to take a plunge and enter a swimming-bout, it is quite a different thing to be pushed into the water from behind when the sight of it gives you cold hands and feet. Compare the inspiring articles of *Young India* of 1921 with the stuff that is now-a-days served out by the weekly, *Harijan*, and you will at once see the difference. It is a changing world that we are living in, and as the world changes, so do the personalities who dominate it.

The problem to-day is not merely one of launching Direct Action. This has to be done effectively—if at all—otherwise it will amount to ‘sabotaging’ and not launching Direct Action. There is also the further question of pursuing it to a victorious end and avoiding any half-way house along our path. Let us be perfectly frank once again and say that even if Direct Action is started by the present Working Committee, the Left will nurse the apprehension that Chauri Chaura and the Harijan Movement, or rather new forms of them, may appear any time and scotch our movement when it gathers strength and volume.

Is this apprehension justified—we may be asked? Of course, it is—otherwise the drive against the Left would not have continued with unabated ferocity even after the declaration of War. From all provinces news continue to pour in of this drive against the Left and in the case of the Forward Bloc it amounts to a vendetta. Naturally, the wrath of the Working Committee is concentrated on Bengal and the Bengal portfolio has been taken over by the President himself. The word has gone round throughout the province that one has only to send in a complaint direct to the Working Committee or to the President from any remote corner and he can rest assured that the Provincial Congress Committee will at once be summoned to the dock. The impartial observer consequently finds lip-homage paid to the ideals of unity and discipline in lengthy press statements but

in actual practice, suppression and persecution of political opponents within the Congress. In the case of the British Government, you may undertake repeated pilgrimages to Viceroy's House and lick the feet that kick you. In the case of your Leftist colleagues, you may nevertheless consistently, with your principles of Truth and Non-Violence, refrain from any demonstration of toleration, goodwill and generosity and continue with full wrath and ferocity a policy of vendetta.

What is the moral of this sordid story? It is this that for the Rightists, British Imperialism is a lesser enemy than Indian Leftism. You can compromise with the former, but in the case of the latter, war to the bitter end. And perhaps if British Imperialism strikes at Indian Leftism our Rightist friends will have no cause for regret.

"If India is to be freed, let her be freed by us or not at all"—so says a Bengali adage and so think our Rightists to-day.



## Our Working Committee

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, December 2, 1939.

The All-India Working Committee of the Forward Bloc met at Calcutta on the 24th November and the following days. Representatives of other Leftist organisations, like the All-India Kishan Sabha and the National Front Group, attended on invitation and their presence and advice were exceedingly helpful. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati who is a host in himself, besides being the General Secretary of the All-India Kishan Sabha, and who is a tower of strength to the Left Movement in India was good enough to visit Calcutta twice within a fortnight—his second visit being on the occasion of the meeting of our All-India Working Committee. The Committee did a great deal of hard thinking and heart-searching and passed sixteen resolutions on questions of varying importance. These resolutions have already appeared in the daily Press but they are also published in one lot in this issue.

The main resolution deals with the present situation in India. It examines in great detail the stand taken by the Congress Working Committee with regard to the major questions of War Policy and India's National Demand and adversely criticises that Committee on some points. This resolution deserves the attention of the public. The central point in it is that the position and stand of the Congress Working Committee have not yet been clarified with the result that the people at large are left in considerable doubt. Some of the utterances and statements of members of that Committee as also of Mahatma Gandhi create the impression that they mean a fight. Others create a contrary impression—as, for instance, the remark of Mahatmaji to the effect that he will resist Civil Disobedience if started and of Sjt. Rajagopalachari, ex-Premier of Madras, to the effect that the Congress Ministers are on a three months' holiday. Over and above these remarks, news trickle in from time to time which tend to confirm the impression that the Congress Working Committee will not ultimately show fight. For instance, it is reported from Bihar that the Advisers who are carrying on the administration

since the recent ministerial resignations, have in some cases been ordering that files are to be put up before the Congress Ministers when they come back to office.

The Forward Bloc has made it clear more than once that in the event of the Congress Working Committee not giving the lead expected of it, it will endeavour to do so—though the best thing would undoubtedly be for the official call to go forth in the name of the Congress. The point at issue now is as to what the C.W.C. will ultimately decide. There should be no room for complaint that it was prepared to give the call and that somebody else butted in. So far, the C.W.C. has been asking others to wait and to give it a chance to satisfy the public demand. But there should be a limit to our patience. Consequently, the sooner the C.W.C. comes to a decision, one way or the other, and announces it, the better for everybody concerned.

As in many other cases, double-faced propaganda is now being conducted against us by our political opponents. We are being condemned for threatening to act independently of the C.W.C. and of Mahatma Gandhi. We are at the same time being adversely criticised for not declaring war on the British Government. Members of the C.W.C. are reported to have openly challenged us in public meetings to go ahead and launch a struggle. Either attack leaves us unaffected, for we have to determine the course of action that would be most conducive to our national welfare, regardless of the smiles or frowns of our critics.

The declared attitude of the Forward Bloc should not be construed as a threat or a challenge to the C.W.C.—for it is not so. That is why it has also been repeatedly stated that the most desirable thing would be for the C.W.C. to move forward and have an undivided Congress behind itself. Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that our attitude has had and will have a steadying effect on the C.W.C. Who can now tell what the C.W.C. would have decided after the outbreak of war in September or whether the Congress Ministries would have resigned by now but for the bold stand taken by the Leftists on the issues of War-policy and National Demand?

The resolution on the international situation is also important since it defines clearly our attitude towards recent world developments. It is not generally recognised that the countries primarily responsible for the mess that we now see in Europe are Great Britain and France. Both these countries have encouraged Fascism in various

forms out of an implacable hatred for Soviet Russia and have sought to eliminate the latter from European Politics. Further, Great Britain is responsible for undermining and ultimately breaking the elaborate systems of alliances which France, largely through M. Laval's efforts, built up on the Continent with a view to encircling Germany. After France was thereby reduced to impotence, she naturally threw herself into the arms of Britain. In consequence thereof, Europe outside Russia, Germany, and Italy, is today being governed by British Foreign Policy. Russia had consistently and tenaciously endeavoured to secure an understanding with Great Britain and France and also with Poland. It was only after she was convinced of the utter hopelessness of this effort, that she decided to enter into a Non-Aggression Pact with Germany. The statements on Foreign Policy made in recent months by M. Molotov on behalf of the Soviet Government are remarkable for their clarity and transparent lucidity and should serve as an example to all Foreign Ministers.

The recent arrest of Pandit V. D. Tripathi, Secretary of the All-India Committee and President of the Provincial Committee of the Forward Bloc is extremely significant. It has brought into prominence before the public eye what we had already known before—viz., that the repressive policy against the Forward Bloc is in full swing. To use a rather unhappy but very effective expression, Tripathiji is the uncrowned king of his own district of Unao in U.P. Besides his position in the Forward Bloc, he is the Chairman of the Unao Municipality, Member of the U.P. Legislative Assembly, member of the Executive Council of the Provincial Congress Committee, of the All-India Congress Committee and of the War Council of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee. The arrest of a leader of such outstanding position carries its own moral.

The other resolutions passed by the A.I.W.C. of the Forward Bloc will show that we are now under cross-fire. There is governmental repression on the one hand and unmitigated vendetta of the Congress High Command on the other. At the moment, the latter is causing more harassment than the former. But we shall survive both.

The resolution on the Bengal Political prisoners was a timely one. It made it clear that the Forward Bloc stood by the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee in its pledge to the Political Prisoners. There is no room for apprehension that that pledge will not be redeemed. Whether as a separate issue or as an integral part of larger All-India

issues, the Bengal P.C.C. will fight for the cause of the Political Prisoners and in this task it will have the whole-hearted sympathy and support of the Forward Bloc.

The resolutions dealing with Muslims under different heads also deserve attention and perusal and particularly of Muslims themselves. They clearly illustrate our manner of approach to the Hindu-Muslim problem. A special resolution on the Majlis-i-Ahrar was absolutely necessary, because the Ahrars have not unfortunately received as much attention so far as they should really deserve.

In conclusion, let it be noted from now by all concerned that the next Independence Day on the 26th January, 1940, will have special significance. Our Working Committee has referred to this matter as well.

## At It Again

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, December 9, 1939.

After a temporary lapse from its customary role, *The Friend of India* has once again appeared in its true colours. During a temporary lapse, it shows balance, dignity and sense of proportion in dealing with affairs both internal and external. But when it comes back to its own, it appears as rabid as a mad dog. In one matter, however, *The Friend of India* has been consistent throughout, viz., its deep dislike and hatred for the present writer. Unlike most Britons, it cannot stand straightforwardness in politics, but fancies those who can cringe and fawn.

One can only hope that *The Friend of India* does not really reflect the mind of Britons in India—whether official or non-official. For if it does, then one must indeed have a poor opinion of them. It is difficult to conceive that they are so erratic and eccentric, changing their views as quickly as a political weathercock. For months, our 'Friend' had been advocating a liberal and progressive policy with regard to India. But on the eve of the Viceregal statement in October, it suddenly assumed a die-hard complexion. Subsequently, thereto, it has been blowing hot and cold alternately.

In foreign affairs, *The Friend of India* was, prior to the War, remarkably well-informed, though its foreign policy might not have met with approval in all quarters. In the old days it was anti-Soviet to the core. But the rise of the Nazis to power served to blunt the edge of its hatred for Russia and things Russian. A soft corner for the U. S. S. R. gradually became noticeable and the wrath of the paper was directed against Nazi Germany. This tendency persisted even after the outbreak of war in Europe and the absorption of Eastern Poland in the U. S. S. R. But since hostilities broke out between Finland and Soviet Russia, our 'Friend' has gone off its head and its writings have been more like the raving of a lunatic than the arguments of intelligent and responsible journalism. Owing perhaps to this stroke of lunacy it has drifted along the path of dishonest journalism. When the All-India Working Committee of

the Forward Bloc was holding its deliberations in Calcutta on the 24th November and the following days, all the papers published its resolutions and also reprinted the editorials of *Forward Bloc*, our official organ, but *The Friend of India* did not. Nevertheless, on the 4th December, it commented editorially on the above in the course of a very significant article under the caption "You have been warned."

That *The Friend of India* has always had a specially soft corner for us—who in India does not know? And this affection deepened since it had to appear and answer before a Court of Law. But in spite of all this, should there be no honesty in journalism? In the old days, Indian nationalists who had to be denounced used to be painted red, as agents of Moscow. Communism was the bogey that had to be raised every now and then and the picture of Red gold flowing into India then used to be dangled before the public eye. After some time the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis supplanted Moscow and Russia became respectable for a while. Whether it was Soviet association with Genega or Stalinite repudiation of Trotsky or superior hatred for Berlin on the Friend's part that accounted for this respectability, one does not know. But it was amusing to notice our "Friend" fraternising with Moscow in order to spite Berlin. It was no longer dangerous for an Indian nationalist to be called a friend of Moscow. To have any sympathy for the Nazis or for the partners of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis constituted the real danger. To our "Friend's" eyes, the flow of Red gold into India ceased—and henceforth it was the Axis gold that began to poison Indian nationalists. Certain sentences in the writer's book, *The Indian Struggle 1920-1934*, taken out of their context, proved handy and a series of denunciatory articles appeared in the columns of *The Statesman*. This tirade was reminiscent of a similar campaign directed against the writer about eight years ago, preparatory to his incarceration without trial under Regulation III of 1818.

After a short lull the attack has started again, the spearhead being its leader of the 4th December. There is, however, one difficulty before our "Friend" on this occasion. What is the scare it is to raise? Moscow or Terrorism or Berlin Revolution or What? To solve this obvious difficulty, the Frankenstein it is trying to create is the Hitler-Stalin combination. And to prepare the necessary background for the panic it has to rouse in this country, it has made a medley of all possible bogeys in two articles on "Communism in India" in

its issues of the 6th and 7th December. In this motley crowd the villain of the piece is no longer Hitler—it is now Stalin.

Perhaps there is one piece of miscalculation on the part of our "Friend." The Indian public are no longer as unsophisticated as they were some years ago. They can now see through *The Friend of India's* game and through the elaborate official propaganda conducted in its columns. We would, however, like to know if this is cricket as generally understood.

Coming events cast their shadows before. So do these articles. We know what is coming, but we are not disturbed. Everything has its price, so has Liberty. We have to pay the price of Liberty, but it is as well for Britishers to remember that brow beating and bullying—with or without gloves—will no longer do. It is a changed India that we live in.

And the Europe that India faces today is also a changed Europe.

## A Reminder

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, December 16, 1939.

It may be remembered that soon after the inception of the Forward Bloc we had declared that in addition to working out the detailed programme adopted by it, the Bloc would aim at achieving a three-fold objective in the immediate future—firstly, Left-consolidation; secondly, conversion of the Congress to its own point of view and the establishment of real unity within the Congress; and thirdly, the resumption of the national struggle in the name of the Congress. No occasion has arisen for altering this immediate objective in the light of subsequent events and in particular, the developments since September last. But a slight modification has become necessary. Owing to the pressure of events the tempo of our movement has perforce been accelerated. We cannot therefore wait till we can convert the majority in the Congress to our point of view and initiate a forward move in the name of the Congress. On the one hand, speedy action has become absolutely necessary, and on the other, the task of winning over the Congress majority has been made more difficult by the persistent drive against the Left and by various constitutional devices as well as executive acts of the Rightist leaders. The endeavour to convert the Congress majority will undoubtedly continue, as also the attempt to get the Congress to launch a forward move. But what if they do not fructify at once? Time and tide wait for no man and the world to-day is now advancing like a roaring cataract. In the present critical situation the Forward Bloc must be prepared to launch a forward move and to act in a dynamic way in the event of the Congress Working Committee holding back or staying its hands. We cannot afford to wait on the doorstep of Time for the day when we shall secure a majority in the Congress or succeed in having a forward move adopted by the Congress itself. It sometimes happens in history that the vanguard has to act in advance of—and perhaps in temporary isolation from—the rest. Desperate situations need desperate remedies at times.

Two arguments will be advanced against such a policy. It will be



argued by doctrinaire disciplinarians that if the Left-wing or the vanguard acts in this manner it will violate discipline and destroy organisational unity. By pseudo-pragmatists it will be argued that if the vanguard acts thus it will isolate itself and thereby reduce itself to impotency—whereas it should in reality seek to isolate the Right-wing leadership from the rank and file.

To the first argument, our reply is that unity and discipline are not ends in themselves but means to an end. They have value in so far as they strengthen us for action and struggle and they are meaningless if they reduce us to inaction. To the second argument, our reply is that while there is a possibility that the vanguard may isolate itself from the rank and file if it adopts a dynamic policy—it is equally possible that in a crisis when action is paralysed owing to the influence of political Hamlets, a bold move on the part of the Left-wing may break the stalemate, bring the eager ranks and file into the vortex and thereby isolate the Right-wing leadership from its erstwhile following. It would be a mistake to suppose that the isolation of the Right-wing Leadership can come only through steady propaganda or through local struggle in different parts of the country. It would be equally wrong to suppose that we should first bring about the isolation of the Rightists before we can look up to the Left-wing to launch a forward move on a national scale. We should never forget that under certain circumstances, the isolation of the Right-wing leadership can best be brought about by the Left-wing taking a leap in the dark, as it were, and initiating a dynamic policy. This may be an adventure of some sort—but not necessarily adventurism.

But how are we to judge if an adventure of this kind will lead to the isolation of the Right-wing or of the Left-wing? It is difficult to answer such a question. It is largely a question of political instinct or intuition.

Today it is possible for us to cogitate as to what would have happened if Lenin's adventure had failed in 1917. What would have happened, we may also ask, if the Irish adventurers of 1916 had brought about their own political death by their rash and hasty action, instead of digging the grave of the Redmondite Party?

Consider again Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha of 1919 which not only misfired but landed the country in the Jallianwallabag tragedy. And what about Hitler's Munich Putsch of 1923 which was ridiculed by the whole world including the Germans themselves?

There is no similarity between such variegated scenes as those of

Moscow, Dublin, Delhi and Munich—but the underlying moral is the same. There is no royal road for isolating an effete leadership. More often than not, bold action on the part of the vanguard becomes indispensable for bringing about such a consummation. And without the isolation of a worn-out leadership further progress is impossible of achievement.

For the new-born Forward Bloc the ninth of July was a formidable hurdle. There were many who apprehended an early death for the Bloc when it faced this hurdle so early in its career. But we were optimistic because we could feel the public pulse. Our anticipations were justified. The Forward Bloc emerged out of the ordeal with added strength and prestige. Subsequent persecution of our members has only speeded up our progress. The Bloc has come to stay and it has already become a factor in the public life of India which cannot be ignored—not even by *The Friend of India*.

We had declared at the outset that the Forward Bloc was the product of historical and dialectical necessity. So it really is. But the “Forward Bloc” has to be forward in policy and in action if it is to justify its existence in future as well. And if the “Forward Bloc” continues to be forward, everything will be well for the country and for itself.

## The Correct Line

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, December 23, 1939.

In life and particularly in politics, there is nothing so harmful or dangerous as an attitude of indecision. This is more so when indecision masquerades in a borrowed mantle. Let us consider the attitude of the Congress Working Committee since September last. Mahatma Gandhi's initial stand on War-policy was perfectly intelligible, though it was not in consonance with public opinion in the country. He advised unconditional co-operation with the British Government on the question of war, but this was in direct opposition to repeated resolutions of the Congress and particularly of the Haripura Congress of 1938. The Congress Working Committee, which invariably follows the lead of the Mahatma, did not venture to do so in the present crisis. Instead, it passed a lengthy finely-worded resolution which gave the man in the street the impression that the Congress was on the war-path, but which in reality camouflaged a mind that was altogether undecided about the future. On one pretext or other, the Committee has been putting off its final decision from meeting to meeting. The first time it postponed a decision, namely in September, it sought to ascertain from the British Government their war-aims as well as their policy regarding India. But after the Viceroy's reply which was nothing less than a slap on the face of the Congress Working Committee, there has been no valid excuse for indecision or procrastination.

Several leaders of the Gandhian Party, headed by the ex-Premier of Madras, expressed their profound disappointment at the Viceregal pronouncement. Their deep disappointment presupposed a hopeful outlook at the start, but we wonder what had led them to expect anything else from the Government. We, on our part, had correctly predicted what was coming; consequently neither surprise nor disappointment overtook us when the reply of the British Government became known.

Smarting under an unexpected blow, the Congress Working Committee promptly decided to direct the Congress Cabinets in the provinces to resign. In the prevailing atmosphere the decision was

good so far as it went, but it was not in keeping with what we regard as sound tactics. Instead of throwing up the sponge, the Congress Ministers should have stuck to their posts, should have gone on implementing the Congress programme and should have invited dismissal while discharging their legitimate duties. If this policy had been followed, then by the time the last Ministry was dismissed, public feeling would have reached the boiling-point.

Nevertheless, we welcomed the resignation of the Congress Cabinets, hoping that it would prove to be the first step in a forward policy. In 'Real Politik,' there can be no such thing as marking-time. One has to move either forward or backward. Consequently, we hoped that once the Ministries were out of our way, the pressure from below would force the Congress Working Committee into a bold and dynamic policy.

The mass-pressure is there all right, but the Committee, including our erstwhile Leftist Leader, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, has, under the Mahatma's leadership, succeeded in resisting it so far. The Committee to-day has no existence of its own—it is but the shadow of Mahatma Gandhi in whose favour it has voluntarily abdicated. But Mahatma Gandhi is no longer the dictator of the Indian National Congress. He is the dictator only of the Right-Wing of that great institution and of some erstwhile Leftist leaders—for the Left-Wing will most definitely not take order from him blindly.

To examine how the Congress Working Committee has so far succeeded in resisting mass pressure would be indeed an interesting study. Having suspended the fight with Imperialism it has been conducting a ruthless and continuous drive against the Left and particularly against the Forward Bloc. This serves to divert public attention from the path and the duty that lie ahead of us. To bewilder the public and thereafter scare it away from the path of struggle, bogeys have been created from time to time. Before the war, we were told that a forward move was impossible, because there was corruption within the Congress and because a forward move, when launched, would lead to an outbreak of violence. Since September last, they have had a brain-wave and we are now told that if the Congress starts a 'Satyagraha' Campaign, Hindu-Muslim riots will inevitably follow. We are awaiting the invention of fresh argument for desisting from a dynamic policy. The tragedy that has overtaken the upper ranks of Congress leadership is due primarily to demoralisation that followed in the wake of office-acceptance. This demora-

lisation was altogether unexpected. Who had ever expected that even those who have fought for years for India's freedom and who have braved the rigours of prison-life would thus fail us in the most fateful hour of our history?

While carrying on the drive against the Left and inventing bogeys of the above sort, the Congress Working Committee has not failed to keep up appearances. Leftist phraseology it has never stinted and hopes are consistently held out that the Congress will soon be on the move. Reports that we are receiving from several provinces and particularly from ex-Ministerial circles belie such hopes. On all sides there are whispers that the Congress Cabinets will stage a comeback and that negotiations are going on behind the scenes for that purpose. It is a hard thing to make the allegation—but we are reluctantly compelled to do so—that the Congress Working Committee and Mahatma Gandhi are to-day out of touch with radical and progressive elements in the country.

The tension and the struggle between the Right and the Left in this country are important and interesting as a historical phenomenon. Lust for power has seized the upper ranks of our leadership—not the power that follows from Independence, but such power as will come through a compromise with Imperialism. Consequently, the Right-Wing will not shrink from a compromise when the opportunity appears, but will not think of an understanding with the Left, in spite of a national crisis which demands national unity. This is 'Macht-Politik' or 'Power-Politics' at its worst. We have no doubt that behind the facade of a party-struggle within the Congress, there is in reality a class-struggle going on all the time.

The latest stunt which has been devised to stave off a struggle and which may in time prove to be the greatest fraud perpetrated on the Indian people by their own leaders, is the proposal of a Constituent Assembly under the aegis of an Imperialist Government. We have made some serious study of History and Politics and in our view, a Constituent Assembly, if it is not a misnomer, can come into existence only after the seizure of power. If, for instance the Congress and the British Government are engaged in a struggle over the Indian problem, the Congress will first have to come out victorious and form a provisional Government to take over power. Only such a Provisional National Government can summon a Constituent Assembly for framing a detailed Constitution for India. The Assembly that is now being proposed by the Congress Working Committee

may be a glorified All-Parties Conference, but it is certainly not a Constituent Assembly. It will meet with the fate of the Irish Convention which was the Creature of Mr. Lloyd George. The Indian people should have nothing to do with such an Assembly the only purpose of which would be to side-track us from our principal task, as the Harijan Movement did in 1932 and 1933.

Our own path is clear. We are now passing through the anti-imperialist phase of our movement. We have to rally all uncompromisingly anti-imperialist elements for the next move. The problem to-day is not merely to force the hands of the Congress Working Committee. That we must do. But even if we succeed therein, with Mahatma Gandhi at our helm, there will always be the danger of another Chauri-Chaura, or another Harijan Movement or another Gandhi-Irwin Pact. For that danger we must prepare in advance, so that we may be able to meet it successfully when the time comes.

Let the Congress Working Committee have the leadership of the nation for all time—we have no objection to that. But a leader must lead. We still hope against hope that the Committee will soon make a move. But if they do not, then, we must act. We are confident that the masses will follow, no matter who gives the lead.

When Imperialism is ended, the Socialist phase of our movement will commence. Those who win power must undertake the task of post-struggle reconstruction.

## Leaders Misleading

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, December 30, 1939.

The ordinary, unsophisticated man who is not politically-minded generally believes that the hero who won several battles will go on winning till the end. Rarely, if ever, does he remember that the victory of Austerlitz may terminate in the debacle of Waterloo. When the tragedy does take place he is overwhelmed with surprise. It is always painful to discover that one's god has, in reality, only feet of clay. When this discovery is once made, the spirit of the people rises in revolt in anger and disappointment, and ruthlessly repudiates the erstwhile god. This is how Sir Surendranath Banerji—once known as Surrender-not Banerji and one of the fathers of Indian Nationalism—was discarded by his own countrymen, his erstwhile worshippers.

It would be unfair and improper to conclude from this that the public are ungrateful or that public memory is short. It only means that while a nation feels grateful for a leader's past services and may love him for the same, it will follow him only so long as he moves with the times and marches at the head of his countrymen. Past suffering and sacrifice can never be a passport to future leadership under all circumstances.

In living and progressive nations there is a link between the old and the new. The wisdom and experience of age is made available to the rising generation without being obstructive. Youth, on the other hand, which is naturally radical and progressive, seeks advice and guidance from grey hairs without giving up its dynamism. Ex-Premier, Lord Baldwin, gave up his office when he was at the height of his power and glory and has been living in comparative seclusion since. He is no longer an obstructive force, but as an elder statesman he wields tremendous influence still and may perhaps be regarded as the power behind the throne.

In a nation that has been enslaved or suffers from a slave-mentality, it is somewhat different. Once leaders ascend the pedestal, they do not feel like retiring voluntarily. They have to be pulled down as

Sir Surendranath Banerji had to be and this is a painful operation indeed. In such a country, the people are more prone to blind hero-worship and take more time to be disillusioned than elsewhere. But the evil day can nowhere be put off indefinitely. In the fulness of time, the naked truth ultimately stands unmasked.

In the present case it is so very difficult for a grateful, admiring and emotional people to believe that those who have held the reins of leadership for two decades, have fought many a battle with varying success and have braved many a storm in life's path will fail us when the supreme moment has arrived. But is there any other conclusion that we can possibly draw? Though warned over and over again since last year, these leaders of ours did not move their little finger to prepare for impending developments. Instead, they ridiculed us. At the Tripuri Congress they were more anxious to wreak vengeance on us and to rehabilitate their lost prestige than to look after the nation's interests. Thanks to them the Indian National Congress has proved to be the only major political organisation in the world that deliberately refrained from preparing for the approaching international crisis.

This is but the beginning of the indictment. How did they behave when the storm actually broke out in September? The inconvenient resolutions of the Haripura Congress of 1938 and Tripuri Congress of 1939 were quietly and unceremoniously shelved. We were told that the Supreme Executive of the Congress had started deliberating. But what was there to cogitate over? Since 1927, the Congress has been deliberating over the war-crisis and has embodied its decision in successive resolutions. There was nothing to reconsider—all that remained was to implement the resolution already passed and reiterated. But all kinds of subterfuge have been resorted to, in order to evade the issue.

The two classic arguments against the adoption of a forward policy have, since September last, been reinforced by a third argument, viz., that a Satyagraha Campaign will culminate in Hindu-Muslim riots. This is not only a subterfuge, but a dishonest subterfuge. What has happened since the Majlis-i-Ahrar of the Punjab launched their campaign in September? Moreover, what does it matter if mischief-mongers, here and there, succeed in creating communal trouble? Did not such stray riots occur in 1921 and 1930 and 1932? If this argument is allowed to go unchallenged, it can always be thrown at us in order to frustrate a forward move.



The strangest thing that has happened since September is the virtual abandonment of the demand for Swaraj and the surreptitious substitution of the demand for a so-called Constituent Assembly in its place. In order to resist the mass-pressure from below, the Congress High Command has cleverly side-tracked the main issue of Swaraj and introduced a false issue.

In the last issue we examined this proposal of a Constituent Assembly and pointed out that what the Congress Working Committee was now demanding was certainly not a Constituent Assembly. Such an Assembly could not meet under the aegis of an Imperialist Government. It could be summoned only by a National Government or a Provisional National Government after power had been transferred to its hands, following a successful fight. The National Demand has been whittled down by the Congress High Command in order to avoid a struggle and because its advisers in Great Britain say that there is a reasonable chance of such a demand being fulfilled.

We can only hope and pray that this demand will not be fulfilled by the British Government—for if it is, then the Congress will surely land itself in disaster. Thanks to separate electorate which has been conceded by the Working Committee, the proposed Constituent Assembly will have such composition that it will soon become the battle-ground of Communal forces. It will ultimately break up in disorder and the enemies of India will point their fingers at the Congress as the real author of the tragedy.

Even if the above Constituent Assembly does succeed in framing a Constitution, it will always be open to the British Government to find an excuse or a plea for not conceding that Constitution to India. This will be the case if the present international storm blows over in the meantime. We feel astounded that it does not strike our elderly leaders that before they could sit down to frame a Constitution, they should first win the right to do so. Have they, we may ask, secured, that right? No. That is why we say that a real Constituent Assembly can be summoned only by a National Government or a Provisional National Government.

One thing we cannot understand. If our leaders really do not want to move, why do they talk big? It would be more honest to follow the clear lead of Mahatma Gandhi, however erroneous it may be. Lengthy resolutions, high-sounding phraseology savouring of Leftism, frothy speeches, periodic doses of bellicose utterances, frequent references to a new world order that need not be fought for,

but will fall from the skies—Imperialism crashing under its own weight without any onslaught from outside—all these fit in with what we know as Kerensky-tactics and ill accord with the demands of 'Real-Politik.' Soon after the Congress ministries tendered their resignation, and the official organ of the Congress High Command declared that the hour had come 'to clear the decks.' Many such hours have passed since then, but nothing has transpired so far. While the decks were being cleared by the official organ, 'War-Councils' were set up in some provinces. These 'War-Councils,' we are informed, are now busy spinning along with their Commanders. Under the order of the Congress Working Committee we have to spin yarns and also spin our way to Swaraj. With such a potent weapon in our hands, Constituent Assemblies appear superfluous.

Now what is all this evasion and backsliding due to? What has really happened to the Congress High Command and to the Generalissimo of Satyagraha? Why are they moving earth and heaven to avoid the straight path that leads to Swaraj?

They are afraid that if and when a struggle is launched, the leadership will pass out of their hands. New forces and new elements will come into the field and they may capture both the machinery and the leadership of the Congress. Hence, avoid a struggle by all means—try to keep whatever power you have already won and work for more through anti-chamber conferences and negotiations. Meanwhile, do all you can to suppress the Left-wing. You may one day come to a compromise with Imperialism—but with the Left-Wing there must be war to the bitter end.

Can one explain this apparent inconsistency—this vendetta against the Left-Wing and against the Forward Bloc in particular, when we are passing through a crisis of the first magnitude and when the leaders themselves have been making repeated appeals for national unity? Can one account for the unceremonious rejection of the innumerable appeals made for the withdrawal of disciplinary action against the Leftists—and particularly of the appeal of no less a person than Viswakavi Rabindranath Tagore? Yes, perhaps we can. This is 'Real Politik,' where neither sentiment nor humanitarianism has any place. Behind the apparent party struggle within the Congress, there is in reality a class-struggle going on all the time. And wherever there is class-struggle—there is ruthlessness, truth and non-violence notwithstanding.

A large section of our countrymen still think that the Congress

Working Committee and Mahatma Gandhi will not be found wanting. With them we would fain say—Amen. But, after all, is this not wishful thinking? We are told that the Mahatma will produce a formula (perhaps a magic formula like Salt Satyagraha) at the next meeting of the Working Committee and that this formula will be presented to the next session of the Congress at Ramgarh in March. Congress elections preparatory to the Ramgarh Congress are to go on in the meantime. Consequently, the programme of the High Command till the end of March has been already fixed. During this period, people have to spin hard and have to create the usual dissensions in the wake of Congress elections. Excellent preparations for a forward move.

One thing more before we close. If the elders think that by avoiding a struggle they will maintain their present position, they are mistaken. This may, in fact, undermine their position much more than if they march boldly ahead in the present crisis. So far as we are concerned, we have to go our way, come what may. The road to freedom is not strewn with roses. It is a path covered with thorns, but at the end of it, there is the full-blown rose of Liberty awaiting the tired pilgrim. Forward, therefore, and ever forward.

## Part III

1940



## *An Address to Students of India*

Presidential Address at the All-India Students' Conference at Delhi in January, 1940.

Comrades,

It has become customary for the President of a Conference to preface his speech with the remark that the Conference is meeting at a most critical juncture. But if I were to use that expression today, I should not be speaking in the language of convention. If you have not summoned me in a light-hearted manner—as I am sure you have not—then there can be no doubt that you have done me a very great honour. Apart from the honour involved, I am deeply sensible of the confidence in and the affection for me which you have exhibited on this occasion. I am in your midst today to answer your call and I thank you most sincerely for honouring me by selecting me as your President.

The dawn of the new year has brought us all together with hearts throbbing with anxious expectation. The problem of problems today is as to how the Indian people should face the crisis that has overtaken them. An average student who in normal times may not look beyond the four walls of his institution is also being forced to put aside his books and his problems for a while and to think of that crisis and his duty in relation to it. You are aware that in such a grave emergency, it is practice and the convention abroad to shut down the Universities and to hand over the entire student-population to the drill-sergeants. What are our students to do in India now?

The approaching war-crisis was looming in the horizon ever since 1927. The Indian National Congress dealt with it year after year and embodied its decision in successive resolutions. The last resolution, which has now become historic, was passed at the Haripura Congress in February, 1938. It was the natural expectation of the public that as soon as the expected crisis broke out, the Haripura resolution would be implemented.

This has not happened. The Congress Working Committee has been thinking for the last four months. But, in reality, there is nothing

to deliberate over. The thinking has been done by the Congress already ever since 1927. And if any further deliberation were necessary, it should have been started and concluded before September last, when we were crying ourselves hoarse in asking the Congress to prepare in advance for coming eventualities. Does it not evince bankruptcy of statesmanship on the part of elders that, thanks to them, the Congress has proved to be the only major political organisation in the world that has not made necessary preparations to meet the crisis?

The silver lining in today's cloud consists of the fact that while the Congress leaders have been deliberating and vacillating, the Majlis-i-Ahrar of the Punjab has been acting. Nevertheless, there are people—and stay-at-homes at that—who do not scruple to cast aspersions on the patriotism of Indian Muslims as a body.

During the last twelve months or more, our suggestions regarding the coming crisis have been pooh-poohed. Our idea of an ultimatum and preparation in advance was sneered at and ridiculed at the Tripuri session of the Indian National Congress in March, 1939. Our elders were more anxious to rehabilitate what considered to be their lost prestige than to consider seriously urgent national problems. There can be no doubt that at Tripuri they failed to look after the nation's interests properly or to rise to the occasion, as was expected of them. They put self-interest and personal prestige above the interest and the prestige of the nation.

In passing, we may ask those who laughed at us at Tripuri if the resolution of the Congress Working Committee passed in September, 1939, was not in effect an ultimatum. But what a difference it would have made to us if the ultimatum had been presented in March last!

Prior to September last, two classic arguments used to be advanced by Mahatma Gandhi and his followers in order to resist the demand for a resumption to the national struggle. Firstly, there was corruption in the ranks of the Congress and secondly, the launching of a "Satyagraha" movement would lead to the outbreak of violence. Since September, they have had a brain-wave and a third argument has been added, viz., the apprehension of Hindu-Muslim trouble. On previous occasions, communal trouble did take place here and there—but that was never used as a plea for deterring us in our march towards our goal. Let us see what other arguments are invented by our elders in future.

It may certainly be argued that the Congress Working Committee

has not been sitting idle since September. Long-winded resolutions have been passed and what is more, the Congress ministries in eight Provinces have been withdrawn. War-Councils have been set up in several Provinces and there is talk of volunteer camps and volunteer organisation. True. But what is all this talk of a three months' holiday indulged in by an ex-Premier? Why whispers on all sides that the Congress Ministers will soon return to office? The man in the street is naturally confused and does not know what to do. To make confusion worse confounded, War-Councils have been ordered to spin. We are now expected to spin our way to Swaraj, but how can we be convinced of the efficacy of this 'magic mantra' of Mahatma Gandhi when we know that a century ago when the Indian people knew nothing but Khadi and hand-spinning, they fell a victim to foreign domination. No, it is time to call a spade a spade and to tell our people clearly that the idea of winning Swaraj through spinning is moonshine. Spinning has its place in our national economy, but let it not be exalted into the method of our national struggle. And let not the Independence Day pledge be vulgarised by introducing clauses about spinning, etc.

Frankly speaking, it is much more honest to follow the unambiguous lead of Mahatma Gandhi in the matter of unconditional support to Great Britain in the War, however erroneous that policy may be, than to resort to confused thinking or to pursue a zigzag course which will lead us nowhere.

It should now be clear from the programme outlined by the Congress Working Committee that till the next session of the Congress is held at Ramgarh, i.e. till the end of March, 1940, no forward move is under contemplation. We know that wherever a grave emergency has arisen, elections have been postponed indefinitely. Not so in the case of the Congress, which is virtually working out a peacetime programme. And we know already that the Congress Working Committee has achieved the unique distinction of continuing its drive against the Left-wing, though in other countries faced with a similar crisis, party politics has been suspended sine die.

What accounts for this strange behaviour of the Congress High Command? They can think of a compromise with the Fascist British Government, but there must be war to the bitter end, where the Leftist and Forward Blocists are concerned. I shall leave it to you to explain this phenomenon—but I shall just suggest in passing that the struggle between the Right and the Left within the Congress is



not so much for today as for tomorrow and that behind the facade of party-struggle there is, in fact, a class-struggle—perhaps an unconscious class-struggle—going on all the time. The cold-blooded, determined and ruthless attitude of our High Command is an exhibition of complete lack of Ahimsa or Non-violence and is a demonstration of 'Macht-Politik' or 'Power-politics' under Indian conditions.

The Problem is—"what are we to do when confronted by our High Command and their shrewd and zig-zag policy?" Judging from past experience, particularly since January, 1939, I have no doubt that they are past masters in political strategy in dealing with their own people. They will not easily allow themselves and their erroneous policy to be exposed, nor will they easily permit themselves to be isolated. Their latest stunt, viz., their demand for a fake Constituent Assembly, is a case in point. Most ingeniously and almost without being noticed, they have substituted the demand for a Constituent Assembly in place of our National Demand, our demand for Purna Swaraj. Perhaps they think that there is some chance of getting this fake Constituent Assembly and if they succeed therein, they will be able to stave off a fight. It seems as if they are capable of any subterfuge, if only they can put off a struggle.

But why are they thus shirking a struggle? What is the real truth behind this whole game? It is difficult to answer the question—but I presume that they are afraid that once a nation-wide campaign is launched, the control and the leadership of the nationalist movement will pass out of their hands. Consequently, their strategy consists in retaining the power that they have already won in the Provinces and in working for some power at the centre, through negotiations with the British Government. Hence these rumours about the Congress ministries staging a come-back. Hence the endeavour to purge the Congress of the Leftists. Hence the vendetta against the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. And hence the elaborate efforts that have been made for some time past to resist mass invasion of the Congress through increased membership and to convert the Congress into a close preserve of the Rightists.

The above apprehension is not altogether without foundation. The Rightists are out of touch with the new forces and the new elements that have come into existence during the last few years. What we may ask, are their contacts with the Kisan Movement, the Working-class Movement, the Student Movement, the Youth Movement and similar radical and progressive movements in different parts of the

country? They have, moreover, lost ground among our Muslim compatriots and among the States' subjects. Consequently, they may nurse the apprehension that in the event of a struggle, they will lose their hold over the movement and ultimately over the Congress.

But there is a fallacy in this logic which may be fatal to the Rightists. If they avoid a fight owing to this fear and apprehension, that in itself may make back-numbers of them.

This brings us to a consideration of Rightist tactics. It is possible that under pressure they may alter their broad strategy and actually launch a struggle and that should not mean that our problem has been solved. If the struggle is launched under such circumstances, then Rightist tactics will consist in prematurely ending the struggle by some means or other. We shall, therefore, have to remain alert and guard against another episode like the Chauri-Chaura episode of 1922, another diversion like the Harijan movement of 1932 or another pact like the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931. In the absence of close vigilance, a struggle launched by the Rightists may end in a debacle. The best course, therefore, would be for the Leftists to announce clearly in advance with what object and with what mental attitude they will enter a struggle, whether it is launched by the Right or by the Left.

A word about the Constituent Assembly is necessary here. A real Constituent National Assembly is one which is convened by a Government after the transference of power has taken place. An Assembly convened by and meeting under the aegis of an Imperialist Government and electorate will surely end in disaster to the Congress and to the Indian people. Let us raise our voice in protest against it while there is time and warn our countrymen in advance of the coming danger, in the event of this demand being fulfilled by the British Government in its own interest.

The immediate problem before us is the launching of the national struggle. Will it be launched by the Congress Working Committee? That is what we all want and that is what will bring a united Congress into the movement. But what if they hold back? Shall we, too, then hold back? The country is ours, as much as it is theirs. Each and every one of us has his or her duty to fulfil towards the common motherland. Consequently, we cannot hold back in this fateful hour of our history. If the leaders fail us, we have to march ahead with such strength and resources as we happen to possess.

Even if the struggle is launched by the Left, it will not mean

that it will be a leftist struggle. The struggle will be a national struggle—no matter who gives the call, the Right or the Left. It will be a fatal mistake to confuse the nature of the call with the nature of the struggle.

In this connection, I cannot help observing on the basis of indisputable facts that the Congress is much stronger today than it was in 1921 or 1930 or 1932. If we have fought thrice with less strength and resources—should we quail before the present crisis?

I, therefore, appeal to you to gird up your loins and prepare for the impending struggle. The struggle coming—what does it matter who gives the call.

Standing today in the midst of a complex situation, it is just possible that you may feel perplexed for a while. The vacillating, zigzag policy of the Congress High Command increases one's bewilderment. The menacing attitude of some communal organisations adds to one's difficulties. The want of unity among the Leftists themselves well-nigh unnerves an ordinary mortal. But though you stand with your backs to the wall, do not for one moment lose courage or self-confidence. Remember, comrades, that the Left Movement today is on its trial. Its future will depend on how you and I come out of this ordeal. Remember, also, that we now have a supreme opportunity for winning Liberty for India. Such a rare opportunity we can miss only at our own peril. Posterity will never forgive us if we do not rise to the occasion.

I confess that I am not one of those who suffer from an inferiority complex. I do believe that even if the call comes from the Left, the masses will readily respond. Though we may be comparatively weak from the purely organisational point of view, the united Left has undoubtedly a larger mass-following than the united Right. Why then should we hesitate if Mahatma Gandhi or the Congress Working Committee does not give the lead that the country has been expecting and awaiting? If the Left is called upon by the logic of History to act as the spearhead of the nationalist movement, let us not be sorry for it. Let us on the contrary, welcome the opportunity, should it come, of playing the role of the vanguard in our movement. We shall thereby help in winning Swaraj, in bringing about the isolation of the Rightists and lastly in establishing the Left Movement firmly in the hearts of our countrymen.

If any of you feel upset at the continued onslaught from the Rightists and at their diversionist tactics whereby the national

Demand has degenerated into a demand for a pseudo-Constituent Assembly, I would appeal to you to keep up your faith and courage and launch the counter-offensive against the Right in the shape of a National Struggle. Only by this means can one hope to frustrate the tactics of our Rightist friends.

In this fateful hour I am reminded of a message once given to *Young India* by one of our erstwhile Leftist leaders. "Freedom comes," he said, "to those who dare and act." The time has come for all of us to dare and act and let not any of us flinch at this critical juncture. I am also reminded of the inspiring words addressed by a famous Italian General to his innumerable followers while the Revolution was still in progress. "I shall give you hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death," said he, "if you will follow me." Let these words ring in our ears now and inspire us to march forward and to dare and act. Only then shall we win victory and Swaraj.

## Danger Ahead

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, January 6, 1940.

In our last issue we drew attention to the latest move of the Congress Working Committee, viz., their demand for a Constituent Assembly. Neither the idea of, nor the demand for, a Constituent Assembly is an innovation. The Congress has repeatedly referred to it in its resolutions. But the form of the present demand and the manner and the circumstances in which it is being put forward is a novelty and an undesirable novelty at that. And the most dangerous feature consists in the fact that this demand has slipped in unnoticed as a virtual substitute for our National Demand for Purna Swaraj. As a piece of political strategy the move is undoubtedly a master-stroke and will confound a large number of Congressmen, including Leftists, who may not be extra-vigilant.

In order to comprehend fully the dangerous character of the above move, we should clarify our minds as to what a Constituent Assembly really signifies. It means no doubt an Assembly elected for the express purpose of framing a Constitution. But who is to convene this Assembly? When and under what circumstances should it be convened or should it actually meet? How will effect be given to its decisions and by whom? These are pertinent questions to be answered in connection with a Constituent Assembly.

When the idea of a Constituent Assembly was first mooted by the Congress, those who have some knowledge of History and Politics naturally inferred that the idea was to have the Assembly convened after the conquest of power, following a national struggle. After a successful fight when power would be transferred to the representatives of the people, they would form the National Government, or the Provisional National Government. This Government would summon a Constituent Assembly for framing a Constitution for the people. Under the aegis of such a government actually in power after a successful struggle, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for mischievous agencies, Indian or alien, to frustrate the object of the Assembly in any way. But what will happen if the present demand is

fulfilled by the British Government now? The Constituent Assembly will be convened by the British Government. It will be elected on the basis of separate electorate. It will meet under the aegis of the present Imperialist Government. There will be no guarantee that the decisions of the Assembly will be given effect to by the British Government and it will be a glorified Debating Society. The floor of the Assembly will become, moreover, the battle-ground for all the communal forces in the country. The present Government standing in the background will be in a position to do all the wire-pulling that they consider necessary. Unless a miracle happens, the squabbles within the Assembly will end in a complete deadlock and the Assembly will prove to be abortive. The British Government will then point their fingers at the Congress as the author of the tragedy and they will take credit for the fact that they responded to the Congress demand unreservedly. What answer will the Congress be able to give in such a predicament?

No, this move is a most dangerous one and we can only hope that the Government, for reasons of their own, will not agree to it. If they do, then the Congress will land itself in disaster.

For the man in the street it is difficult to understand how the Congress Working Committee could put forward a demand of this sort at this juncture. It has agreed to separate electorate, knowing what its consequences would be. It has not demanded that there should be a prior announcement that the decisions of the Assembly would necessarily be implemented by the British Government. Consequently, even if the Assembly arrives at some agreed solution, it will be open to the British Government or the British Parliament to review, revise or alter it, as in the case of the Round Table Conference on India.

Indications are not wanting that this demand has a reasonable chance of being accepted by the British Government. And why not? They do not stand to lose, but to gain therefrom. Messengers from Great Britain who have recently visited India have pleaded with the Congress authorities for a postponement of the struggle. They have also held out hopes that the British Government would be in a position to come to some settlement over the Indian issue within the next few months and that even conservative opinion is veering round now. In normal circumstances, this sort of allurements should fall flat on a nationalist leader, but not so in the case of the present Working Committee who are anxious to find any excuse or justification

for postponing the struggle sine die. In future, we shall probably hear of more messengers coming from Great Britain with frequency and regularity.

There is another practical consideration which should further open our eyes to the danger that is ahead of us. After a victorious struggle the leaders of the nation always emerge with tremendous influence and prestige and are therefore able to guide the public and shape public opinion. The public, too, develop so much confidence in the leaders that it almost amounts to blind faith. In such circumstances, it is the leaders who can influence and control the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly and it then becomes impossible for mischief-mongers or reactionaries to frustrate the purpose of that body. A Constituent Assembly to-day as demanded by the Congress, will most surely become a platform for intrigues and manoeuvres. It is extremely doubtful if there will be any individual or organisation with so much influence and prestige as to be able to guide and control its deliberations. Among Congressmen themselves, the Rightists being in charge of the Congress machinery today, will be returned in much larger numbers than the Leftists. If through good luck, a settlement is reached, the greatest common measure of agreement will be determined not by the most progressive but by the most moderate opinion. Considered from every point of view, therefore, the demand for a fake Constituent Assembly should be repudiated in the most emphatic manner.

While on this subject, we are reminded of a scene when the Constituent Assembly was meeting in Russia after the Revolution of 1917. It was a large gathering composed of all shades of opinion opposed to the Tsarist regime. The Bolsheviks, who were the most progressive group there, were in a hopeless minority. The heterogeneous Assembly was swayed more by platform orators and doctrinaire revolutionaries of the Kerensky type. The Bolsheviks watched and waited till they were convinced that nothing fruitful would come out of it. They then left the Assembly and ordered its dissolution. What followed is now history. The Constituent Assembly died but the Revolution lived. What would have happened if the Bolsheviks had stuck to the Constituent Assembly, one could easily imagine now.

In the case of the Russian Constituent Assembly, there was little or no danger from foreign agencies. The Bolsheviks only apprehended that Mensheviks, moderates and reactionaries would dominate the

Assembly and manipulate the deliberations in their own way. Hence they felt called upon to dissolve it.

The Irish analogy is even more relevant and interesting than the Russian. After the Great War, when the Irish people—and particularly the Sinn Fein Party—were showing fight, the then Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Lloyd George, tried a similar experiment. He called upon the Irish people to frame their own constitution through an Irish Convention—an Irish variant of the Constituent Assembly now demanded by the Congress Working Committee. The Sinn Fein leaders, who were more clever and far-sighted than our own, left the Irish Convention severely alone and continued their work outside. The Convention met and debated for sometime, but in the absence of the Sinn Fein Party, it proved to be a farce. The Convention broke up; the Sinn Feiners continued the fight and what freedom Ireland won was the result of their efforts.

Let us lose no time in raising our voice of protest against this dangerous move of the Congress Working Committee and let us repudiate the proposed Constituent Assembly in advance, while there is time to prevent its inauguration. And let us tell the Committee plainly that if they are unable to lead the country along the path of struggle, the least they can do is to refrain from adopting such harmful and dangerous tactics.



# Ramgarh

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, January 13, 1940.

The darkest hour is ahead of the Forward Bloc. It has from its inception been fighting on a double front viz. alien Imperialism and Indian Counter-revolution. The path it had selected was not an easy one, but it is doubtful if anybody had expected Indian Counter-revolution to be so determined, ruthless and vindictive as it has in fact proved to be. We all know from personal experience that very often it is more difficult to combat reaction at home than Imperialism imposed from without. We have seen in recent months how so many comrades who would have fought foreign Imperialism bravely have succumbed to the onslaught from the Right.

Looking at the scene quite dispassionately for a moment, as a student of History would, one cannot but admire the Rightists who with all their lip-homage to Non-violence and Toleration are fighting a political game in a most downright manner. This is 'Real-Politik' as History knows it and the game is bound to thrill all political fighters—even those who are being subjected to persecution at present.

One of the immediate objectives of the Forward Bloc was the consolidation of all the Leftist elements in the Congress and in the country. Since this could not be achieved on the platform of the Bloc, the Left Consolidation Committee was brought into existence. The Committee has had a chequered career. The moment it showed its strength at the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, held in Bombay in June, 1939, the onslaught from the Right began—the first occasion being the 9th July demonstrations. Since then some of the Leftist elements have been steadily dropping off from the Left Consolidation Committee. The astute Rightist leaders have been pursuing a dual policy in their handling of the Leftists. Some of the compromising and 'reasonable' elements are being systematically wooed. But the harder nuts are being dealt with ruthlessly. The result has been a gradual thinning of the ranks of the Leftists. To make matters more difficult for the latter, governmental persecution has been

steadily going on in several provinces and it was first resorted to under the Congress regime. Today, doubts are being raised as to whether Left-Consolidation is at all possible any longer.

Left-Consolidation can be achieved in either of two ways. The first method is the one already adopted by us viz. rallying the Leftist elements on a common platform and on the basis of a common minimum programme. If this method fails, then another method is still open to us. The events of the last few months have put Leftists to a severe test—they have had to pass through a fiery ordeal. Some have succumbed in the process, but not all. Those who have stood the test bravely have proved to be genuine Leftists and Left-Consolidation will now mean their consolidation. In nature, floods are often preceded by a drying up of the rivers. A thinning of the ranks is often a prelude to a dynamic expansion. This will happen to the Left-movement in this country. Those who have not lost faith during the course of the past struggle, will agree with us that the darkest hour that is ahead of us will be followed by the rosy dawn.

The role of the Forward Bloc in Indian History is not that of His Majesty's opposition. We have seen remarks to the effect that the aim of the Forward Bloc is merely to ginger up the present policy and programme of the Congress. There could be no greater misunderstanding than this. The Bloc stands for something positive and dynamic. The role of the antithesis in the Dialectic of History is not a negative one. It is something positive and dynamic which has to carry us swiftly along the path of progress.

It is not outside the domain of possibility that as we approach the darkest hour, some of the elements in the Forward Bloc may quail before the ordeal. But there can be no going back for us—nor any marking-time. Forward Bloc has to move forward without a pause, without a break. That is its historical role. Determination has to be met with greater determination and persecution with unflinching heroism. Only then shall we survive the ordeal—only then shall we succeed in our fight on a double front. Our cause is just and our role historic. Let us not therefore lose faith and courage, even if unrelieved darkness overcomes us for a while.

There are moments when reason fails to rend the veil of the future and on such occasions men who are weak in faith sometimes lose courage and self-confidence. But where reason fails, intuition steps in. Intuitive insight can pierce through impenetrable darkness and give us a glimpse of what is to come. Today, intuition tells us that no

power on earth can vanquish us and our cause. The tremendous mass-response that greets us everywhere has but one meaning. Despite persecution on a double front, people realise that we are moving with the times—that we are thinking their thoughts and acting in consonance with them.

The air is thick with rumours of a compromise with the Government. Some fancy that the endeavour to conclude a settlement will be made before the annual session of the Congress meets at Ramgarh in March next. Others opine that the Ramgarh Congress will vest plenary powers in the Congress Executive and that the final attempt at a compromise will be made after March. So-called English friends of India have been advising the Rightist leaders to mark time till March next, when an agreement will become possible. There is not the least doubt that in the Rightist plan, Ramgarh Congress occupies an important place. How else can you explain the determined and ruthless attempt that is being made to exclude Bengal, real Bengal, from the Ramgarh Congress? The Rightist plan has to be put through at Ramgarh and Bengal with her contingent of 544 delegates may prove inconvenient to the Congress High Command. Therefore Bengal has to be eliminated by hook or by crook.

But this is not so easy. You can exclude Bengal from the Ramgarh Congress, but you cannot exclude her from the public life of India.

For the Leftists, Ramgarh may not have much importance—but the month of March will be important in the history of India. Leftists should therefore gather together during this month and prepare to meet the counter-revolutionary and compromising tactics of the Rightist leaders. In this connection it may be necessary to hold an All-India Conference somewhere in Bihar at about the same time as the Ramgarh Congress. Among others, Leftists who have been expelled from the Congress or subjected to disciplinary action for their political convictions should attend this conference and make a success of it. Such a Conference will have a salutary effect on both the Congress Right-Wing and on the British Government and will tone up the militant Leftists in the country. Members of the Forward Bloc need not be so anxious about attending the Ramgarh Congress. With so many Leftist leaders under disciplinary action and with real Bengal out of the Ramgarh Congress, there will be little chance of influencing the decisions of that Congress. Members of the Bloc should rather concentrate all their energies on the task of winning Purna Swaraj as soon as possible.

## Our Problem

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, January 20, 1940.

The All India Conference of the Forward Bloc was held in Bombay on the 22nd June, 1939, and the Constitution and Programme of the Bloc were adopted there. We have, therefore, had a little more than six months to organise ourselves throughout the country. What have we been able to achieve within this period?

At the outset, it should be noted that from July last we have been the target of a vehement drive against us from the Congress Working Committee. They have not given us any breathing time and during the last six or seven months, we have been actually fighting on a double front.

There are occasions when it is comparatively easier to fight foreign Imperialism than Indian Reaction. This is perhaps one of such occasions.

Nevertheless, we can legitimately claim that today "Forward Bloc Zindabad" (Long live Forward Bloc) has become a mass-slogan. Its message has reached the remotest villages and has roused the sympathy and support of the masses everywhere. The Forward Bloc has, moreover, an All India organisation at its back today.

The mass-sympathy that the Forward Bloc has met with from the very start has been quite phenomenal and has surpassed our fondest expectations. One wonders how this has been possible, especially when one remembers that there has been persistent and widespread opposition from interested quarters. The only explanation available is that the masses have instinctively felt that the Forward Bloc stands for something bold and dynamic—something forward and progressive.

The Bloc has stopped the drift towards constitutionalism and compromise in the Congress and has thereby stemmed the rot that had set in. The Congress is consequently much stronger today than it would have been without the Forward Bloc. What is more, today it is possible for the Forward Bloc to stand up before the British

Government and the Congress High Command and tell them that in the last resort, the Forward Bloc is prepared to go ahead and launch a struggle, should the older leaders fail us in this crisis.

But the real problem that faces us is an organisational one. Our organisational development has not been able to keep pace with our growing popularity.

Perfecting an organisation and building up a new cadre need time and money—perhaps time more than money. We have had very little time at our disposal and the international crisis overtook us very early in our career. But we cannot put off facing the crisis boldly, till we have perfected our organisation. The crisis has to be met with such resources as we now possess. National Struggle and organisational development must proceed hand in hand. There is no other option before us.

Meanwhile let us always remember that our chief problem today is an organisational one. We have to face the coming struggle boldly and at the same time go on with our task of organisational development as best as we can. Perhaps, with good luck, we shall emerge out of the struggle with a perfected organisation.

## Stem the Rot

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, February 10, 1940.

The air is thick with rumours of persistent efforts at a compromise between the Congress High Command and the British Government. Circles in close touch with our Ex-Ministers are greatly interested and feel optimistic about an early return of the Congress Ministries. There are two theories afloat at the present moment. Some surmise that the Ramgarh Congress will be presented with a *fait accompli*. Others hold that the Ramgarh Congress will vest the Working Committee or Mahatma Gandhi with plenary powers and that the compromise will follow and not precede the Congress session. The first theory appears to us to be improbable. Whether the second will fructify remains to be seen. What is certain is that both Mahatma Gandhi and the British Government are keen on a compromise. Gandhiji wants to win Swaraj without a fight. The Government would welcome a compromise before the Spring offensive on the Western Front begins. At the time of writing it still appears unlikely that the British Government will concede the minimum that Gandhiji would demand for effecting a compromise. We are referring to Gandhiji alone because the Working Committee has made him the Sole Dictator.

What is troubling the British Government and is preventing it from going far enough in the direction of meeting the Indian demand is its impression that the Congress will not ultimately show fight. Despite the new situation created by the European War, the British Government has not discarded its age-long habit of making concessions too inadequately and too late. We also know from experience that even when concessions do come, they are granted half-heartedly and they consequently lack generosity and good grace. Consequently, it is quite on the cards that despite the keenness of both parties, the proposed compromise may not come off.

Another thorn in the path of a compromise is the attitude of the British Government towards the Indian minorities. The former is not yet ready to give up playing with the latter or using them as a

lever against the Congress. But the latest reports go to show that if a compromise with the Congress High Command could be arranged the Government would be prepared to let down the Muslim League. The recent editorial comments in the *London Times* and other British journals lend colour to this view. Should the British Government come to an understanding with Gandhiji behind the back of the Muslim League, it appears to us inevitable that both the Congress and the Muslim League will split. Within the Congress, Gandhiji and all those who stand by him will line up with British Imperialism. On the other side, the loyalist elements in Muslim League, being under the thumb of the British Government, will break away from Mr. Jinnah and the progressive section who are influential in the League Council today.

It is high time that we seriously contemplated what would happen in the event of the Congress High Command compromising with the Government. It is but natural that in the name of unity and discipline, the Rightists should try to force the compromise down the throats of dissident members. The former hope that a majority decision will silence the latter, just as the campaign against the acceptance of ministerial office in the Provinces was liquidated as soon as the All India Congress Committee decided in favour of office-acceptance. But what will the dissenting Leftists do on this occasion?

It would be hazardous now to make a prediction on behalf of the entire Left. For the present, we shall speak only on behalf of the Forward Bloc. The Bloc cannot accept a compromise with British Imperialism. This would be altogether inconsistent with our goal of Purna Swaraj. We shall, therefore, be constrained to declare that we are not bound by the compromise and that we shall continue the fight for Independence. The compromise-wallahs will, in our view, be guilty of two crimes—firstly, abandoning the objective of Independence and secondly, giving up the method of non-co-operation and Satyagraha. We shall, therefore, be perfectly justified in declaring that the compromise-wallahs having given up the essentials of the Congress, automatically cease to be Congressmen. Should they persist in their folly or in sticking to the Congress, we would be further justified in expelling them from the Congress.

For the Congress is essentially and fundamentally an organisation which stands for complete Independence and the method it has adopted is that of non-co-operation and Satyagraha. If a Congressman abandons these essentials and fundamentals he automatically

ceases to be a Congressman. And if the Congress tomorrow gives up its fundamental objective and method, it will cease to be the Indian National Congress with which we have been familiar since 1920. With the voluntary withdrawal or expulsion from the Congress of the compromise-wallahs, the Congress will be restored to its former status and will become once again the revolutionary organisation that it should always be. Why should we secede from the Congress and allow the back-sliders to inherit the name and the traditions of that body? The latter should be expelled and it will be for them to set up a parallel organisation if they so desire. The Congress should belong exclusively to those who stand for Independence and carry on the struggle for it.

We realise that the compromise-wallahs may not voluntarily withdraw from the Congress and may, with the help of a packed majority, continue exploiting the name of that body. In that event one can visualise two Congresses. It will then be for the people—for the masses—to decide and declare which is their Congress. About their answer, we have no doubt in our minds—for the masses are with us. The united Left has a very much larger following than the united Right, despite the prestige of Mahatma Gandhi's name. What, after all, is the following of the present Congress Working Committee without the support of the Left-Wing. It does not command the confidence of the organised peasantry, of the organised workers, of the organised youths, of the organised students and of the minorities. Consequently, with such a slender following, can they deliver the goods on behalf of the Indian people? The answer is obvious.

Without waiting for the day when the Rightists will succeed in effecting a compromise, we should, from now, try our level best to frustrate all efforts in that direction. With a view to that end, an Anti-Compromise Conference is being arranged at Ramgarh at the time the Congress is to meet. All Leftists and Leftist organisations in the country should muster strong at Ramgarh on the 18th and 19th March and help to make the Anti-compromise Conference a complete success. We have no doubt in our minds that if this Conference proves to be a success it will automatically put an end to all efforts at a compromise and it will thereby save the Congress and the country from a national calamity.

The Bihar Provincial Kishan Sabha is organising a peasants' rally at Ramgarh which will be attended by two lacs of Kishans. It is also proposed to hold the All-India Conference of the Forward Bloc



at Ramgarh at or about the time the Congress meets. The occasion may therefore be opportune for holding an All-India Anti-Compromise Conference. We hope that this Conference will be held and the Leftists and Leftist organisations all over India will muster strong with a view to make this Anti-Compromise Conference a complete success. This Conference will serve to end all talk of a compromise and stem the rot that has set in.

Meanwhile may we not appeal to Mahatma Gandhi to give up these long and tiresome journeys to Viceroy's House and to come and stand at the head of his countrymen as he did in 1920?

## The Bengal Tangle

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, February 17, 1940.

Friends who are not in intimate contact with Congress affairs are often bewildered at the recent developments inside the Congress. This is particularly the case with comrades in remote parts of the country. Common-sense logic argues as follows:—"The Congress stands for Independence. The members of the Congress Working Committee and of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee are all public servants who have set out to achieve Independence for their country. Why then this family quarrel?"

Others speaking in quite a naive manner, appeal in the following terms:—"Please make up your differences with the Congress High Command and present a united front to the enemy." As if it is we who have picked up a quarrel with the Working Committee!

Public memory is proverbially short. Hence a brief recapitulation of past events is called for.

In April, 1939, when the All-India Congress Committee met in Calcutta under my Presidentship and the question of the constitution of the new Working Committee came up, we were confronted with the Gandhian theory of a homogeneous Cabinet. We were told in effect that in future, the Rightists could not work in co-operation with the Leftists. In fact, this non-co-operation had begun in February, 1939, after my re-election as President, when the members of the Working Committee sent in their resignation.

Not only were we confronted with non-co-operation, but we were told by no less an authority than Mahatma Gandhi himself that a national struggle in the immediate future was out of the question.

In such a crisis, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru argued that in spite of all internal differences, I should neither resign nor start a new organisation within the Congress, in view of the international crisis that was looming in the horizon. I argued that since an international crisis was unavoidable in the near future and there was no hope that the Congress High Command would rise to the occasion when it

came, we should lose no time in setting up an organisation of our own. This organisation would enable us to face the international crisis boldly, even if the Working Committee then failed us.

So the Forward Bloc and the Left-Consolidation Committee came into existence!

Let us next refer to the demonstrations of 9th July, 1939. Under the auspices of the Left Consolidation Committee, public meetings were held all over India in order to protest against two obnoxious resolutions of the All-India Congress Committee passed at its Bombay meeting in June, 1939. One of these resolutions virtually robbed individual Congressmen of the right to offer civil disobedience. The other resolution sought to make Provincial Ministries more powerful than the Provincial Congress Committees concerned. Following my lead, the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee participated in the 9th July demonstrations.

This was the signal for the onslaught on the B.P.C.C. I was removed from the Presidentship of the B.P.C.C. by a fiat of the Working Committee. The B.P.C.C. did not take this lying down and a long controversy ensued. During this controversy it became clear that a solid majority in the B.P.C.C. would adhere to me despite the frowns of the High Command. And this majority was a Leftist majority.

The above developments since June, 1939, demonstrated that even if the A.I.C.C. passed by a majority a resolution which was objectionable on grounds of principle, the minority would not hesitate to revolt against it. In other words, there would not be smooth sailing for the Rightists as in the case of office-acceptance in the provinces, when the oppositionist minority silenced itself as soon as the All-India Congress Committee decided on office-acceptance by a majority.

The Rightist leaders, looking far ahead, decided that the minority should from now on be forced into loyalty and discipline—so that when ultimately a compromise with British Imperialism was arrived at by a majority—no discordant voices would be raised by dissenting Leftists. As a matter of fact, the same consideration was responsible for strenuously opposing my re-election as President.

There was another source of anxiety for the Rightists. They wanted to have an easy time at the next Congress at Ramgarh in Bihar and were eager to avoid the uncertain atmosphere which had prevailed at the Tripuri Congress in March, 1939. It was clear to them that Bengal

would send a strong contingent of Leftist delegates to the Ramgarh Congress—perhaps 450 in number. This had to be frustrated at any cost.

People who are not acquainted with Congress affairs in other provinces are under the impression that it is only the Provincial Congress Committee of Bengal that is fighting the Congress High Command. The contrary is, however, the case. The Forward Bloc being an All-India organisation, we are in touch with what is happening in every corner of the country. We are, therefore, in a position to state authoritatively that the Leftists in general, and the Forward Bloc in particular, have been the target of attack on the part of the Working Committee in every Province. The attack has been harder where the position of the Leftists and of the Forward Bloc is comparatively stronger. And because our position is the strongest in Bengal, the Bengal P.C.C. has incurred the maximum wrath of the High Command.

Successive steps have been taken by the Working Committee to curb and humiliate the B.P.C.C. but to no avail. On a flimsy ground, a partisan Election Tribunal was foisted on the Bengal P.C.C. The rules for the Tribunal framed by the B.P.C.C. came in for special attention and interference at the hands of the Working Committee, unlike what happened in the case of other provinces. It was then discovered by the High Command that these devices would not help to reduce our majority in the new P.C.C. Then the Working Committee adopted the drastic and desperate step of virtually superseding the B.P.C.C. by handing over to a partisan ad hoc Committee the entire responsibility of running the election of delegates for the Ramgarh session of the Congress to be held in March, 1940. Once Leftist Bengal was out of the way, the Rightists would have an easy time at the Presidential election and at the Ramgarh Congress.

As an interesting interlude, an Auditor was sent by the Working Committee to examine the accounts of the B.P.C.C. But his Herculean efforts ended in smoke. The Working Committee had been misinformed by its agents in Bengal who had reported that the All-India Forward Bloc was being financed by the funds of the B.P.C.C. and of the Bengal Parliamentary Party.

We have no doubt in our mind that the drive and the vendetta against the Leftists and the Forward Bloc will continue so long as the Rightists entertain hopes of a compromise with British Imperialism

or of getting back to power in the Provinces. At present we are witnessing an exhibition of power Politics and no one need be surprised at what is happening.

Whatever steps we take in self-defence or as a reply to the onslaught from the Right, must be on an All-India front. The Forward Bloc offers an All-India front if no other organisation will. Let everybody rest assured that Leftist Bengal is not going to be isolated from Leftist India.

The conflict in Bengal is thus a conflict on an All-India plane—a conflict between the forces of Reaction and of Progress—a conflict between the Right and the Left—a conflict between the policy of compromise and of no-compromise. The ultimate solution of such a conflict cannot take place in the local or the provincial sphere. The solution will come only when Reaction is overthrown—and when the policy of compromise is discarded in favour of an uncompromising struggle with imperialism. Till then, let us go on fighting bravely and boldly on a double-front, with the firm conviction that we are going to win and to win soon.

## Towards Communal Unity

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, February 24, 1940.

The annual session of the Congress is upon us and much depends upon what will transpire at Ramgarh when the Congress meets there. The Leftists will be in a hopeless minority in that Congress—thanks to the enforced absence of Bengal and to the drive against the Leftists conducted by the Congress High Command throughout the country during the past year. Bengal delegates who would in normal circumstances, have attended the annual session of the Congress need not feel sorry for their enforced absence. Even if they could be present in full strength at Ramgarh, they would not be able to influence the decisions of the Congress. The heavens will not fall if the Leftists do not bother about the Ramgarh Congress. In fact, it may be better if they could help to convert the Ramgarh Congress into a Rightist Congress.

This year, more important than what will transpire inside the Congress is what will happen outside the Congress Pandal. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha has given the call for a mammoth peasants' rally to be attended by at least two hundred thousand peasants from the neighbouring districts. An All-India Anti-Compromise Conference is also going to meet at Ramgarh about the same time as the annual session of the Congress. If this Conference proves to be a success, it may eclipse the Congress in its political importance. In any case, it will bury once for all, the talks and the efforts at a compromise between the Congress High Command and British Imperialism.

It is imperatively necessary for the political advancement of the country that the Congress High Command should be forced to give up their attempt to arrive at a compromise with British Imperialism. When this is done, there will be but one path open to the Congress—namely, the path of uncompromising struggle leading to Purna Swaraj. All those who stand for the Independence of India will then be obliged to launch a national struggle.

The call for a national struggle will be an appeal to all anti-

imperialist elements in the country and to all patriotic men and women. When the bugle is sounded, all those who hunger after freedom will naturally fall in line and resume freedom's march, regardless of their religious faith and denomination.

When people become "comrades-in-arms" in the struggle for liberty, a new *esprit d' corps* will develop—and along with it, a new outlook, a new perspective and a new vision. When this revolution comes about, Indians will be a changed people and a revolutionary people at that. It will then be easy for them to solve many of the questions which to-day appear difficult to solve.

Under present conditions, it appears well-nigh impossible to destroy the canker of communalism and foster all-round nationalism in our public life. But how easy this task will become, once we develop a revolutionary mentality on a nation-wide scale.

Communalism will go only when the communal mentality goes. To destroy communalism is, therefore, the task of all those Indians—Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, etc., who have transcended the communal outlook and have developed a genuine nationalist mentality. He undoubtedly has a genuine nationalist mentality who wages a war for national freedom.

In every fight a special responsibility devolves on the vanguard of the army. In the war against communalism, a special responsibility similarly falls on the shoulders of the front-fighters. It is their task to lay the foundation of inter-communal—i.e. national unity. Hindus and Muslims, Sikhs and Christians who fight for India's Independence must be specially commissioned to solve the communal problem. Once they solve this problem and announce it to the whole country—the atmosphere will automatically change and the death-knell of communalism will be sounded. If the front-fighters show the way, the nation will ultimately follow.

Let us not therefore sit with folded hands waiting for the day when the High Command of the Congress and of the Muslim League will bring about a solution of the communal problem. Let us rather see to it that the real fighters for freedom get together and solve this problem. If they succeed, the first and the most formidable hurdle will be overcome and the general public—the entire nation—will follow in their footsteps. Those who love freedom and will die for it can solve the communal problem more easily than anybody else. Forward, therefore, all front-fighters and fulfil the mission that to-day is yours.

## A Word About Germany

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, March 13, 1940.

It seems that in modern warfare speed and mobility are exceedingly important factors. There is an old saying—"Well begun is half done." One should in these days modify it and say—"Quick begun is half done." Germany has been practising this teaching with scrupulousness and precision. Whether in the military occupation of the Rhinehand, or in the annexation of Czechoslovakia or in the invasion of Poland or in the latest inroad into Scandinavia, she has always acted with lightning rapidity. By attacking suddenly the enemy's nerve-centres she has tried to overwhelm or paralyse him before he could realise what had happened. Such swooping tactics presuppose careful planning over a long period and adequate preparation in accordance with it. Nazi Germany has been a past-master in this art of detailed planning and careful preparation.

Besides detailed planning and adequate preparation, energy and vigour are needed to fulfil a particular programme according to a timetable. All these qualities the Nazis certainly possess. Owing to their speed and mobility they have invariably caught the enemy napping and overpowered him without much difficulty.

The case with which Czechoslovakia was overpowered and annexed by Germany came as a surprise to many. The conquest of Poland within three weeks was a still greater surprise, because Poland was reputed to have a powerful army with the necessary modern equipment and the Poles were known to be fearless fighters.

The annexation of Czechoslovakia was necessary on strategic grounds in view of the coming attack on Poland. The annexation of Poland, or at least of the Polish Corridor, was necessary in order to link up East Prussia with the main portion of Germany. The annexation of Austria, of Danzig, of Memelland—one can understand and account for on grounds of race and nationality among other reasons. But what about poor Scandinavia?

The small Scandinavian countries of Denmark and Norway never constituted a menace to powerful Germany. Why, then, did the



latter violate their territorial integrity? The ostensible ground is that Great Britain had laid mines in Norwegian waters and Germany acted in retaliation.

But this answer is not an adequate one. If Britain was responsible for laying mines in Norwegian waters, Germany should have struck hard at her in retaliation. Why did she strike at Denmark and Norway instead?

The reason is that Germany had grounds for believing that Great Britain was planning to occupy Denmark and Norway—just as she had occupied Salonika in Greece during the Great War. So Germany forestalled her enemy and herself occupied the two Scandinavian countries. Because of greater speed and mobility, Germany could do that in advance of Britain. The occupation of Denmark was like a picnic and that of Norway was like a cake-walk. With careful planning and preparation all this could be accomplished with lightning speed.

The occupation by Britain of the Faroe Island, which belonged to Denmark, shows that German anticipation of the British occupation of Denmark and Norway was not ill-founded.

Both Denmark and Norway can now be used as a jumping-off ground for a future attack on the British Navy, as also on the British territory.

Germany may be a Fascist or an Imperialist, ruthless or cruel, but one cannot help admiring these qualities of hers—how she plans in advance, prepares accordingly, works according to a time-table and strikes with lightning speed. Could not these qualities be utilised for promoting a nobler cause?

## *The Ramgarh Address*

Full text of the Presidential Address at the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference, Ramgarh, Bihar, March 19, 1940.

Comrades,

You have done me a very great honour by inviting me to preside over the deliberations of the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference at Ramgarh today. At the same time the responsibility you have thrown on my shoulders is onerous to a degree. This Conference is intended to focus all the anti-imperialist forces in the country that are now determined to resist a compromise with Imperialism. To preside over such a Conference is by no means an easy task. This task becomes all the more serious and arduous when the Chairman of the Reception Committee is no less a person than Swami Sahajananand Saraswati. It is in response to Swamiji's clarion call that we have assembled here today.

Comrades, I shall fail in my duty if before proceeding to discuss the problem of the day, I do not pay a tribute to those who are responsible for organising this Conference. I happen to know something of the obstacles and the difficulties that had to be overcome before this Conference could meet and I can, therefore, speak with a certain amount of authority. These obstacles and difficulties were of a twofold character. In the first place, there were physical and material obstacles and difficulties to be overcome at Ramgarh before adequate arrangements for the Conference could be made. In the second place, persistent hostile propaganda all over the country had to be faced and counteracted by the organisers of the Conference. The most surprising and painful of this propaganda was the determined endeavour of a section of Leftists (or shall I say pseudo-Leftists) to make this Conference impossible by openly condemning it and also by trying to sabotage it. As a matter of fact, during the last few months it has become more and more evident that a number of Leftists have begun to play the role of apologists of the Rightists—but such a phenomenon is not new in history. Man lives to learn and the longer he lives, the more does he realise the aptness of the oft-repeated truism that history repeats itself.

It has been argued by the apologists of the Congress Working Committee that the Congress is itself the biggest Anti-Compromise Conference and that such a Conference is, therefore, unnecessary. The resolution of the last meeting of the Congress Working Committee which met at Patna is held up before our eyes in order to demonstrate that the Congress has adopted an uncompromising policy. One cannot but admire the naïveté of such an argument, but is it meet and proper for politicians and political workers to be so very naive?

One has only to go through the whole of the Patna resolution and particularly through the latter portion of it in order to realise that there are loopholes which detract from the intrinsic value of that resolution. No sooner was this resolution passed than Mahatma Gandhi came forward with the statement that the door had not been banged on future negotiations for a settlement. Mahatmaji's subsequent lengthy remarks on Civil Disobedience do not assure us by any means that the period of struggle has commenced. In fact, what has distressed and bewildered us during the last year and a half is the fact that while on the one hand red-hot resolutions are passed and statements issued by members of the Congress Working Committee, simultaneously other remarks are made and statements issued either by Mahatma Gandhi or by other Rightist leaders which create a totally different impression on the average mind. Then there is the moot question as to whether the Patna resolution would have been passed at all, but for the pressure exerted by the Left during the last six months.

The country eagerly awaits a clear and unequivocal declaration from the Congress Working Committee that the door has finally been banged on all talks of a compromise with Imperialism. But will this declaration be forthcoming? If so, when?

Comrades, those who aver that the Congress is the biggest Anti-Compromise Conference perhaps suffer from shortness of memory and their brains consequently need refreshing. Have they forgotten that as soon as the War began, Mahatma Gandhi proceeded to Simla without caring to consult the Congress Working Committee and informed His Excellency the Viceroy that he was in favour of rendering unconditional help to Great Britain in the prosecution of the War? Do they not realise that Mahatma Gandhi being the sole Dictator of the Congress, his personal views necessarily have a far-reaching implication? Have they forgotten that since the outbreak

of War, the Congress Working Committee has side-tracked the main issue—namely, our demand for Purna Swaraj—by putting forward a demand for a fake Constituent Assembly? Have they forgotten that some prominent Rightist leaders, including members of the Congress Working Committee, have been continuously whittling down the implications of a Constituent Assembly and that they have gone so far as to accept separate electorate and the existing franchise for the Legislative Assembly as the basis for electing the Constituent Assembly of their dreams? Have they forgotten that after the resignation of Congress ministries, several Congress Ministers have been showing an inordinate desire to get back to office? Have they forgotten the consistent attitude which Mahatma Gandhi has adopted during the last six months in the matter of a compromise with the British Government? And do they not know that behind the smoke-screen of hot phrases, negotiations for a compromise have been going on apace.

Unfortunately for us, the British Government have ceased to take the Congress seriously and have formed the impression that however much Congressmen may talk, they will not ultimately show fight. Since September, 1939, there has not been any dearth of resolutions and statements. Some members of the Congress Working Committee opine that these resolutions have impressed the world. But whether they have impressed the world or not, they have certainly not impressed the British, who are essentially a realistic race. During the last six months we have offered them only words and words and we have received the time-worn reply that so long as the Hindu-Muslim problem remains unsolved, Purna Swaraj is unthinkable.

Since September last India has been passing through a rare crisis when men's minds have fallen a prey to doubt and vacillation. The first to fall were the leaders themselves and the demoralisation that seized them has been spreading as a contagion throughout the land. A determined and widespread effort is needed if we are to stem the rot. To make this effort really effective, our activities should be focussed at an All-India Conference of all those who are determined to have no truck with Imperialism.

The crisis that has overtaken us may be rare in Indian history, but it is nothing new in the history of the world. Such crisis generally appear in periods of transition. In India we are now ringing down the curtain on an age that is passing away, while we are at the same

time ushering in the dawn of a new era. The age of Imperialism is drawing to a close and the era of freedom, democracy and Socialism looms ahead of us. India, therefore, stands today at one of the crossroads of history. It is for us to share, if we so will, the heritage that awaits the world.

It is not to be wondered at that men's minds should be bewildered when the old structure is crashing under its own weight and the new is yet to rise out of the ashes of the old. But let us not lose faith in ourselves, or in our countrymen or in humanity in this hour of uncertainty. To lose faith would be a calamity of the first magnitude.

Such crises constitute the supreme test of a nation's leadership. The present crisis has put our own leadership to the test and the latter has been unfortunately found wanting. It is only by analysing and exposing the causes of its failure that we can learn the lesson of history and lay the foundation of our future effort and achievement. But such analysis and exposure will necessarily be painful to all concerned, though there is means of avoiding it.

I may digress at this stage and draw an analogy with similar crises in other climes and ages. When the October Revolution broke out in Russia in 1917, nobody had a clear conception as to how the revolution should be directed. Most of the Bolsheviks were then thinking in terms of a coalition with other parties. It was left to Lenin to denounce all coalitions and give out the slogan—"All Power to the Soviet." Who knows what turn Russian history would have taken but for this timely lead of Lenin's during a period of doubt and vacillation? Lenin's unerring instinct (or intuition) which ultimately proved to be prophetic, saved Russia from disaster and from a tragedy similar to that which overtook Spain the other day.

Let us now take a contrary case. Italy in 1922 was to all intents and purposes, ripe for Socialism. All that she needed was an Italian Lenin. But the man of the hour did not arrive and the opportunity slipped out of Socialist hands. It was immediately seized by the Fascist leader, Benito Mussolini. By his march to Rome and his seizure of power, Italian history took an altogether different turn and Italy ultimately went Fascist instead of going Socialist. Doubt and vacillation had seized the Italian leaders and so they failed. Mussolini had one supreme virtue which not only saved him but brought him the laurels of victory. He knew his mind and he was not afraid to act. That constituted the essence of leadership.

Today our leaders are wobbling and their vacillation has demoralised a section of Leftists as well. "Unity," "National Front," "Discipline"—these have become cheap slogans which have no relation to reality. Befogged by such attractive slogans, they seem to have forgotten that the supreme need of the hour is a bold, uncompromising policy leading us on to a national struggle. Whatever strengthens us for this purpose is to be welcomed. Whatever weakens us is to be eschewed. Unity which ties us to the apron-strings of Rightist politicians is by no means a blessing. We might as well induce the Congress to effect unity with the Liberal Federation—if unity is to be desired under all conditions and circumstances.

In the present crisis, the most distressing phenomenon is the disruption within the ranks of those who were hitherto regarded as Leftists. The immediate future will prove to be the acid test of Leftism in India. Those who will be found wanting will be soon exposed as pseudo-Leftists. The members of the Forward Bloc, too, will have to demonstrate by their work and conduct that they are really forward and dynamic. It may be that in the ordeal that is ahead of us, some of those who are branded as Rightists today, will prove to be genuine Leftists—Leftists in action, I mean.

A word is necessary here in order to explain what we mean by Leftism. The present age is the anti-imperialist phase of our movement. Our main task in this age is to end Imperialism and win national Independence for the Indian people. When freedom comes, the age of national reconstruction will commence and that will be the Socialist phase of our movement. In the present phase of our movement, Leftists will be those who will wage an uncompromising fight with Imperialism. Those who waver and vacillate in their struggle against Imperialism—those who tend towards a compromise with it—cannot by any means be Leftists. In the next phase of our movement, Leftism will be synonymous with Socialism—but in the present phase, the words "Leftist" and "Anti-imperialist" should be interchangeable.

The problem of the hour is—"Will India still remain under the thumb of the Rightists or will she swing to the Left, once for all?" The answer to this can be furnished only by the Leftists themselves. If they adopt a bold, uncompromising policy in their struggle with Imperialism, regardless of all dangers, difficulties and obstacles, then the Leftists will make history and India will go Left.

To those who may still be thinking of a compromise, the recent

history of Ireland and the sequel to the Anglo-Irish Treaty should prove highly instructive and edifying.

A compromise with Imperialism will mean that an anti-imperialist national struggle will soon be converted into a civil war among the people themselves. Would this be desirable from any point of view?

In the event of a compromise being effected with Imperialism in this country, Indian Leftists will in future have to fight not only Imperialism, but its new-fangled Indian allies as well. This will necessarily mean that the national struggle with Imperialism will be converted into a civil war among the Indians themselves.

Let us take time by the forelock and let us act while it is not too late. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati has sounded the clarion call. Let us respond to it with all the strength and courage that we possess. From this Conference let us send out a warning to both Imperialism and its Indian Allies. The success of this Conference should mean the death-knell of compromise with Imperialism.

Before we part, let us also set up a permanent machinery for implementing the resolutions of this Conference and for waging an uncompromising war with Imperialism. Everybody now realises that if the Working Committee of the Congress does not give the call for launching a national struggle, others will have to do so. It would, therefore, be in the fitness of things for this Conference to set up a permanent machinery for undertaking this responsibility—should the Working Committee fail us in this crisis. I hope and trust that the deliberations of this Conference will be a prelude to work and struggle on a nation-wide scale and on an All-India front.

*Inquilab Zindabad*

# The Bengal Hindu Mahasabha

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, March 30, 1940.

The annual All-India Conference of the Hindu Mahasabha was held in Calcutta towards the close of last year. As a conference it was a great success and it afforded considerable satisfaction to the Mahasabha leaders who began to hope that their organisation would forge ahead in Bengal. At that time, it was whispered about that the conference was merely a preparation for the coming Municipal Election in Calcutta and subsequent events have not belied that report.

With a view to promoting the civic welfare and advancement of Calcutta and in order to avoid unnecessary friction and clash over the elections, the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha arrived at an understanding through their respective representatives. The terms of the understanding were duly published in the press. The basis of the understanding was that the elections would be run in the name of the Joint Congress Corporation Election Board and that all those who would be elected would join the Congress Municipal Association. The Congress Corporation Election Board would co-opt six nominees of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Committee that would select candidates would have an equal number of representatives from both the organisations. But the elections would not be run separately by the Hindu Mahasabha nor would there be a separate Hindu Mahasabha Bloc in the Corporation. If any communal question came up before the Corporation in future, the Congress Municipal Association would not make it a party question but would allow liberty to the members to vote as they desired.

The afore-mentioned agreement did not last long. Differences arose over the selection of candidates and the agreement had to be abandoned.

Prior to the above understanding with the Hindu Mahasabha, I had made a public appeal to all organisations interested in the elections, and particularly to the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim



League, asking for their co-operation in the domain of civic affairs, in spite of any differences that might exist on other questions. I also addressed letters to several organisations in this connection. We naturally felt gratified when the Hindu Mahasabha responded in the above manner.

According to our reading of the situation, the temporary agreement was possible because of the pro-nationalist elements in the Hindu Mahasabha. The agreement fell through because the die-hard communal elements in the Hindu Mahasabha who were throughout opposed to any understanding with the Congress, ultimately got the upper hand.

There has been a countrywide propaganda against us because of our understanding with the Hindu Mahasabha over civic affairs. Much of this propaganda is mendacious, while some of it is based on misunderstanding. We are convinced that the basis of the understanding was a sound one and was fully consonant with Congress principles. If the understanding had been implemented in due course, the principles of nationalism would have triumphed and not those of communalism. Unfortunately, to some politicians and political agents we are the *bête noire* and any stick is good enough to beat us with. But we desire to assert even at this late hour that the basis on which we arrived at a temporary understanding with the Hindu Mahasabha is a basis on which a similar understanding could be arrived at with any other organisation.

The New Calcutta Municipal Act which is the result of the recent Amending Bill and according to which elections have just been held, has created a new situation for Calcutta which is fraught with danger. If the Indian members of the Corporation, both Hindu and Muslim, do not join hands, then the Corporation will pass into the hands of Britishers. A handful of Britishers will begin to dominate the Corporation as they have been dominating the Bengal Assembly.

We tried to avert this calamity by seeking the co-operation of the Hindu Mahasabha in civic affairs while adhering to Congress principles. We have been disappointed. Moreover, the tactics employed by some Hindu Mahasabha leaders for whom we had great personal regard, as also by some Hindu Mahasabha workers in connection with the elections, have caused us pain and sorrow. The Hindu Mahasabha did not fight a clean fight.

What is more, the Hindu Mahasabha candidates included men who had tried their level best to break the Congress Municipal Associa-

tion and to that end had formed the United Party in the Corporation in co-operation with British and Nominated Groups of councillors. Some of them have been re-elected and one could easily anticipate how they would behave in future. The Hindu Mahasabha has given evidence of greater desire to down the Congress than to save the Corporation from British domination.

It remains to be seen if any other Indian group in the Corporation will show more keenness to resist British domination than to fight the Congress.

The above action of the Hindu Mahasabha is the beginning of a new phase in its history. It has come forward to play a political role and to make a bid for the political leadership of Bengal, or at least of the Hindus of Bengal who have been the backbone of Nationalism in this country. With a real Hindu Mahasabha, we have no quarrel and no conflict. But with a political Hindu Mahasabha that seeks to replace the Congress in the public life of Bengal and for that purpose has already taken the offensive against us, a fight is inevitable. This fight has just begun.

## The Call of Ramgarh

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, April 6, 1940.

In the last issue we published in full the resolutions passed at the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference which met at Ramgarh on the 19th and 20th March, at the time that the Indian National Congress assembled there. The Conference was organised in the teeth of opposition on the part of Right-wing Congressmen. Till the very last, unscrupulous methods were employed by them in order to frustrate our Conference. Nevertheless, the Conference proved to be an unqualified success. Not only was the attendance phenomenal, surpassing that of the Congress itself—but the Conference afforded a much-needed platform to all genuine anti-imperialists who gathered together from every corner of the country.

The main resolution passed at the Ramgarh Anti-Compromise Conference on the 20th March dealt with the question of our National struggle. That resolution was passed unanimously, amid wild acclamation and frenzied enthusiasm. As soon as it was declared carried, the bugles were sounded and one hundred thousand people jumped to their feet, mad with joy and holy inspiration. It was a sight which human memory will never forget.

Ramgarh gave the call and we who were there at the Conference, responded to a man. Our fight has already begun. It is now for the nation to take it up.

On the 6th April, will begin the annual observance of the National Week. That week is a week of humiliation in the recent history of India, for in 1919 the Jallianwala Bagh massacres took place at Amritsar in the Punjab. But it is often necessary to remind a subject nation of its humiliation in order to rouse it to a sense of self-respect and honour.

This year the National Week will have a unique significance, because the Anti-Compromise Conference has ordered that on the 6th April, all local struggles should be intensified and a struggle should be commenced on an All-India basis and on an All-India front. Today we stand on the eve of the National Week with hearts pulsating with new life and inspiration.

Who knows what the future has in store for those who stand on the brink of a precipice? Will they win Swaraj or will they not? Will they be able to overcome enemies abroad and croakers at home, both on the Right and on the Left?

They may win Swaraj or they may not. But one thing is certain. They will have the satisfaction of having done their duty when others failed. They will be upholding the honour of the Indian Nation at home and abroad. And what is more, they will be ensuring the future of the Left Movement in this country. Whether Independence is won by one stroke or not, the grave of Rightism will be dug once for all and Leftism will be firmly rooted on Indian soil.

The bugle has been sounded. The die has been cast. Let nobody falter at this hour. We have to leap ahead and ever ahead. Out of the unborn future will spring the light that will bring us all that we have been striving for throughout the ages—Liberty and Equality; peace and bread; and above all, the Holy Grail of joy sublime.

## The Caravan Marches

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, April 13, 1940.

The political stalemate is now broken. The call of Ramgarh has borne fruit. The bugle that was sounded there was echoed and re-echoed all over the land and from the living hearts of the people has come the response. During the last week, one has been thrilled to read the papers from day to day. No longer are we merely criticising and cogitating. No longer are we engaged in endless controversy and in hair-splitting arguments on Local Struggle vs. National Struggle. We are on the march. Annapurnaiah in Andhra, Senapati Bapat and ex-Civilian Kamath in Bombay, Kisan leader Bhuskute in Maharashtra, Professor Ranga in Madras, Ashrafuddin Chowdhury and Satya Ranjan Bakshi, Secretary of the Bengal Congress and of the Bengal Forward Bloc respectively and a host of comrades—belonging mostly to the Forward Bloc and the Kisan Sabha—are now in prison. They have gone forth first and theirs is the glory. All honour to them.

The problem now is—what are we to do? In 1930, when India was in the throes of a revolution, a body of croakers, then regarded as ultra-leftists, stood aloof from the movement and refused to join it, on the ground that Congressmen were counter-revolutionaries. To call those men and women counter-revolutionaries who were defying alien 'law and order,' braving the rigours of prison-life and facing the baton-charges of the police was a bit too much for even the gullible Indian. The movement grew from strength to strength and inspired the teeming millions of this country and the ultra-leftists were left high and dry and completely isolated from the revolutionary masses.

Today, the same ultra-leftists are in a similar situation. Like truly doctrinaire politicians and bookish revolutionaries, they are standing aloof from the struggle that has begun. By this policy, they will hurt nobody but themselves. The caravan will march on, despite their indifference and possible obstruction. This is the time for action—not for wordy warfare or hair-splitting over the meaning of words.

Reports that have reached us from different parts of the country go to show that everywhere our functions have been an unqualified success. In some places, Gandhites joined hands with Congress Socialists and 'National Fronters' in order to frustrate our work, but they met with miserable failure. There can be no doubt today that the masses are with us.

Is it not an irony of fate that the National Front Group are not coming forward to join the National Struggle ? They could at least have come forward to intensify the local struggles and extend their scope, leaving it to others—to the Kisan Sabha and the Forward Bloc, to wit—to work as they liked. But their present policy appears to be almost like a 'dog in the manger' policy. They will neither join the struggle themselves, nor permit others to do so. In 1930, those who had gone in for a national struggle were condemned as counter-revolutionaries: to-day they are being condemned as disruptors of unity. The ultra-leftists have yet to learn that that unity is real and is worth having which leads to action and struggle. Unity which paralyses action is meaningless and ineffective and can be described as the unity of the graveyard.

As the hours roll by, excitement and inspiration are on the increase. As if to help us in our mission, the Government struck on the first day and again on the last. The more they strike and the harder they strike, the stronger will be the reaction and the greater the response. The day has gone by when people would be cowed down by repression.

As we march on, many others have to follow, though rather tardily. The Rightists are setting up Satyagraha Committees, War-Council and the like and the leaders are parading in shirts and shorts. This is all to the good. But how long will this prelude last ? When will the real drama begin ? If only it had begun at Ramgarh, we would have been behind the Rightists and not ahead of them. But destiny has forced us to act as the spearhead of the struggle and as the vanguard of the national army. This is a role which will do honour to anybody and no sacrifice is too great that may be necessary in order to fulfil it.

Let the drums beat and the bugles be blown. Let youthful hearts pulsate with life and the blood dance with joy. The hour of deliverance is at hand—we have only to do our duty and to pay the price. India has arisen from her age-long slumber, reborn and re-juvenated. Her sons and daughters are going forth to fight the battle Royal. Let all join in sympathy and help.

The supreme test is taking place now. The chaff is separating from the grain, the Rightists from the Leftists. Out of this ordeal, Leftism will emerge triumphant. The overthrow of Rightism will mean the defeat of Moderatism, Reaction and Compromise. And when Leftism emerges triumphant, no power on earth can deny India any longer her birthright of liberty.

## Swamiji's Message

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, April 20, 1940.

The British Government, like any other Imperialist Government, are unsparing, ruthless and determined. They do not hesitate to strike whenever that is deemed necessary and they seldom respect persons. The tallest in the land have therefore to suffer when they happen to incur the wrath of the powers that be.

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati is, in this land of ours, a name to conjure with. The undisputed leader of the peasant movement in India, he is today the idol of the masses and the hero of millions. It was indeed a rare fortune to get him as the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference at Ramgarh. For the Forward Bloc it was a privilege and an honour to get him as one of the foremost leaders of the Left Movement and as a friend, philosopher and guide of the Forward Bloc itself. As a matter of fact, following Swamiji's lead, a large number of front-rank leaders of the Peasant Movement have been intimately associated with the Forward Bloc.

The Sword of Democles at last fell on Swamiji and he was arrested this morning at Patna under the Defence of India Act. Yesterday he was in Calcutta and we spent long hours in conversation with him. Little did we know at the time that the warrant for his arrest was waiting for him at Patna. He left Calcutta last night and this morning at Patna he was placed in custody.

Before he left Calcutta, we issued a joint statement under our signatures appealing for a proper observation of May Day throughout the country. That statement will be found in this issue.

On hearing of his arrest, we immediately decided to observe the 28th April as an All-India Swami Sahajanand Day for the purpose of protesting against his incarceration. We earnestly hope that that day will be observed in such a manner as to give a fitting reply to the British Government.

We congratulate Swamiji on the signal honour he has won through his arrest and incarceration. In fact, one feels like envying



him for being able to force the Government to take action against him.

Swamiji's arrest is to be welcomed. It will inspire millions to break the stalemate and take plunge. One can no longer continue sitting on the fence. The time for action has come and we must act.

Swamiji has disappeared behind the bars, but he has left behind a legacy. We have to learn from him the lesson of his life—the lesson of service and sacrifice, of sound political instinct, of radicalism and dynamic socialism. He is essentially a man of action and when arrested, he appealed to his countrymen not to delay and procrastinate—but to act at once.

Swamiji's arrest is nothing less than a challenge to New India. That challenge we have now to take up. Let this British Government see and note that the country stands solidly behind him.

With the sacred resolve "Give me Liberty or give me Death," let us continue our march with redoubled vigour and renewed determination. All obstacles will then disappear and freedom will dawn on this benighted land.

## The New Parade

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, April 27, 1940.

London has spoken again. But the day is dead and gone when a prospective utterance of a Secretary of State for India used to whet the curiosity of the Indian public. That is why the announcement regarding Lord Zetland's speech as well as the actual text of it have fallen flat on our people. The speech has been brushed aside as one of the usual, unimaginative, bureaucratic utterances that emanate from the banks of the Thames.

Judged from the British point of view, the Indian situation may be described in one word as a stalemate. But who can end this stalemate and how? Can British Imperialism do it? Evidently, it lacks the dynamism that is necessary for rising to the occasion and taking a bold step. And it lacks this dynamism because it has lost the sense of justice as well as the revolutionary mind that are needed if such a crisis has to be met and solved in a proper manner.

An old imperialist mind always works in a groove. It can never strike out a new path. That is why when decay once sets in, it is difficult to arrest the downfall of Imperialism. One is reminded here of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire which collapsed almost like a house of cards at the end of the Great War. Even after 1914 when the Great War began, that Empire could possibly have been saved if the rulers had taken a bold step and fulfilled the reasonable demands of suppressed nationalities like the Czechs, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, etc. Imperialism—and particularly old imperialism—is traditionally "wooden and inelastic."

But we need not regret this phenomenon. The very fact that the old Imperialisms lose their elasticity and their capacity to adjust themselves to the changing environment may in the long run be a blessing, though it may render our immediate task more difficult than it otherwise would be.

During the last four years and particularly during the last eight months, one has noticed that as compared with the old Imperialist powers, a new Imperialist power like Germany has shown far greater

dynamism and mobility. Without this dynamism, a revolutionary and unheard-of step like the Soviet-German Pact would not have been possible. And without this mobility a swift attack on Scandinavia which has taken the whole world by surprise would never have been possible.

Dynamism is a sign of life and a sign of growth. But the dynamism is healthy, beneficial and good which is the expression of a progressive idea. The latter type of dynamism India badly needs to-day.

It is not Whitehall alone that is marking time to-day. Wardha, too, is doing the same. How the Congress Working Committee intends breaking through the mist of uncertainty and inaction that has enveloped us, we do not know. Nor, perhaps, do they know. The Gandhian Congress waits impatiently at the Mahatma's doorstep for the "inner light" to shine forth. But what if that light should fail us as it did at Rajkot the other day? When it failed at Rajkot, its substitute, the new light or the new technique, was neither welcomed nor accepted by the people. History may once again repeat itself, in connection with the present crisis.

After the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference which met at Ramgarh on the 19th and 20th June at the time of the Congress, there has been some activity in Congress headquarters. A Satyagraha pledge has been devised and members of all Executive Committees of all Congress organisations are obliged to take it on pain of disciplinary action. We cannot possibly take this pledge and for more reasons than one. Firstly, our struggle has already commenced. Secondly, there is no knowing if and when the Congress Working Committee will launch the struggle. Thirdly, by taking the pledge we shall place ourselves entirely under the discipline of the Congress Working Committee and it will no longer be possible for us to participate in a struggle launched by any other organisation or agency. Nevertheless, we would welcome this move provided it does ultimately lead to a national struggle.

We have had evidence of another form of activity in Congress Headquarters. Leaders' camps are now being organised in several places and leaders are taking part in drill and parade. Pictures of this new parade have appeared in the Press and they are interesting. No such parades took place in 1921 or 1930 or 1932 when the country had experience of a nation-wide struggle for Swaraj. The novelty of this new parade has proved attractive. This also has to be welcomed because it is an advance on the marking-time policy of the

Congress Cabinet. But when will this "field-parade" lead to action in the wider domain of Mass-Satyagraha? This is what worries us now.

There is a widespread notion today that a very restricted form of Satyagraha may be started in the near future by the Congress Working Committee as a result of the pressure exerted by the anti-compromise-wallahs. There is also a rumour that this restricted form of Satyagraha may take the form of hunger-strike or "fast unto death" on the part of one or more leaders. But we should not be misled or carried away by such tactics. Neither Chauri Chaura, nor Delhi Pact nor Harijan movement nor a new fast unto death should divert our attention from the path of uncompromising mass-struggle. We want freedom for the masses and freedom which will be won by the masses through their own effort, suffering and sacrifice. Only then shall we attain real Swaraj and lasting Swaraj.

## Congress and Communal Organisations

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, May 4, 1940.

There was a time, not long ago, when prominent leaders of the Congress could be members and leaders of communal organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League. In those days the communalism of such communal organisations was of a subdued character. Hence Lala Lajpat Rai could be a leader of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Ali Brothers could be leaders of the Muslim League. In Bengal, an ex-President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and of the Bengal Provincial Conference, like Moulana Akram Khan, could be a leader of the Muslim League. But in recent times, circumstances have changed. These communal organisations have become more communal than before. As a reaction to this, the Indian National Congress has put into its Constitution a clause to the effect that no member of a communal organisation like the Hindu Mahasabha or the Muslim League can be a member of an elective Committee of the Congress.

Since the Congress imposed this ban, a tendency has developed among certain circles to regard these communal organisations as untouchable. While trying to discard social untouchability, we are, as it were, encouraging political untouchability. Consequently, whenever an attempt is made to bring these organisations nearer to the Congress, many people are scandalised. This happened in the case of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee when it attempted an understanding with the Hindu Mahasabha and later on, with the Muslim League, in the domain of civic affairs.

Two attempts were made at a rapprochement with the Hindu Mahasabha. The first was made towards the end of February last, prior to the Calcutta Municipal Elections. The second was made about the middle of April (last month), after the General Election and on the eve of the Alderman Election.

The basis of the first agreement was that the elections would

be run in the name of the Congress alone and that after the elections, all the successful candidates would join the Congress Municipal Association. The election of candidates would be made by the representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress jointly and the Congress Election Board would co-opt a member of representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha. This agreement broke down ultimately over the selection of candidates and in consequence thereof, the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha fought a battle royal at the polls.

Judged in the light of Congress principles, the above understanding was unassailable. Nevertheless, a great deal of prejudice and resentment was in evidence not only among Muslims but also among orthodox Congressmen, including Gandhiites when the news was published. One can account for this only on the theory that of late we have been developing a species of political untouchability.

The second understanding with the Hindu Mahasabha broke down on the night of the 16th April at about 10 P.M. over the selection of five candidates for the posts of Aldermen to be elected by the Councillors in a body. After this final breach, negotiations between the Congress and the Muslim League were started at 11 P.M. and they culminated in an agreement at about 2 A.M. in the morning.

The agreement took place over the question of Aldermen and Mayor. If all goes well, the agreement will be extended to other municipal problems. And with good luck, the scope and sphere of such an understanding may one day be enlarged so as to embrace much larger questions concerning the province and the country.

Thanks to the Hindu Mahasabha and to papers like *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* that have suddenly developed a rabid communalism, communal venom is being emitted from day to day, with a view to poisoning the minds of the Hindus in Bengal and elsewhere. But all attempts to mislead the Hindus have so far failed. Two mammoth meetings of the citizens of Calcutta were held at Shradhdhananda Park and Deshbandhu Park recently, for obtaining the verdict of the Calcutta public on the above Congress-League Pact. At the first meeting, at a modest estimate twenty thousand people were present and at the second meeting thirty thousand. At both meetings, a unanimous vote of confidence was given us. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the fact that a certain number of communally-minded Hindus are furious over the above understanding.

We, on our part, do not regard the Communal organisation as untouchable. On the contrary, we hold that the Congress should try continuously to woo them over to its side. During the last three years, repeated attempts have been made to bring about a rapprochement between the Congress and the Muslim League. At a certain stage, the Writer, then President of the Congress, met Mr. Jinnah, the President of the Muslim League, and several interviews took place. At that time, the attempt failed, though the writer had been blessed by the Congress Working Committee and by Mahatma Gandhi. Those who had not objected to that attempt which failed ultimately, now strongly object to the present attempt, because it has succeeded. Can prejudice go any further?

We regard the present agreement with the Muslim League as a great achievement not in its actuality, but in its potentiality. During the last three years, we have been groping in the dark, but without success. Every time we have come up against a dead wall of communal prejudice and passion and we have been frustrated in our efforts. This time we have broken through the wall and through the fissure, a ray of light has poured in. There is now some hope that we may ultimately succeed in solving a problem which has proved well nigh insoluble to many. Great achievements are often born out of small beginnings.

## Wake Up, India!

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, May 11, 1940.

Events in Europe are rapidly heading towards a crisis. The Nazi invasion of Holland, news of which has reached us, is a sure indication of the determination and ruthlessness of the present-day rulers of Germany, as well as of the speed with which they can act. What has happened since the outbreak of war has not taken us by surprise, except perhaps the Scandinavian exploits of the Nazis. In fact, actual events have confirmed our prognostications to a very large extent.

In October, 1938, we began to talk publicly about the impending war-crisis in Europe. The resolution passed unanimously at the Bengal Provincial Conference at Jalpaiguri in February, 1939, gave expression to this thought and suggested the presentation of an ultimatum to the British Government on the issue of India's National Demand. The Jalpaiguri resolution was brought before the Tripuri Congress in March, 1939, but it was unceremoniously rejected. If it had been adopted there, the ultimatum would have been presented to the Government, preparations for the national struggle would have begun in right earnest and on the expiry of the stipulated period of six months, the national struggle would have been launched. But nothing of the kind happened. On the contrary, the Congress Working Committee launched the offensive against the Left-Wing. This drive has continued till today.

Six months after the Tripuri Congress, war broke out in Europe in September, 1939. With the outbreak of war, hopes were raised in many quarters that there would be a closing-up of the ranks, preparatory to a commencement of the struggle for freedom. The resignation of Congress ministries in the Provinces intensified these hopes, but they were soon dashed to the ground. Various arguments were advanced with a view to evading a struggle with the British Government. We, on our part, consistently and continuously urged an immediate launching of the struggle—for more reasons than one. One of the major considerations lay in the fact that in the Spring of 1940, the war would enter on a critical phase and it was but



natural that we should try to time our own movement accordingly. If we wanted a crisis in India in the Spring of 1940, it was necessary for us to launch the campaign a few months earlier. But our argument and our appeal did not go home. It was contended against us that when the crisis in Europe would not come till April, 1940, we should not be in a hurry to start our movement.

Our leaders talked and talked—argued and argued, as the months rolled by. Nothing effective was done and the Spring of 1940 arrived. With the breath of Spring, the military activities of the Germans assumed an aggressive form. One fine morning, Denmark was occupied and Norway was invaded. Germany struck with lightning speed. The Allies were surprised and out-manoeuvred.

Holland has now been invaded and will probably be overrun in no time. What more surprises are in store for us nobody can tell. People are talking of a Japanese attack on the Dutch East Indies. The Italian Army seems to be getting ready for the fray—with the Duce making bellicose speeches from the balcony of Palazzo Venezia and the crowd outside shouting—"Tunisia, Tunisia." The Cabinet in London is tottering after the debacle in Norway.

But what is India doing? What is the Indian National Congress doing?

Hindus and Muslims are drifting apart. The Congress Right Wing is attacking the Forward Bloc and the Kishan Sabha. The Forward Bloc and the Kishan Sabha, on their part, are endeavouring to carry on without the help of the Congress High Command. The Congress High Command is undecided as to what should be done and its attitude of doubt and vacillation is proving contagious and demoralising to a degree. The Muslim League is more concerned with communal than with national problems. The cumulative effect of all these is that India as a whole is in a morass today. In the absence of a dynamic leadership the people, as a whole, seem to have lost their dynamism.

How can we save our country from this political rut, utilise the international crisis to India's advantage and win freedom for ourselves? This is the supreme problem of the hour.

As every day passes, one feels like biting his fingers in helpless agony. Can nothing be done to save India even at this late hour? Will not the enslaved people of India cast off their lethargy, sink their petty differences and stand up as one man to demand Liberty for this great and ancient land?

## WAKE UP, INDIA

We are prepared to play our humble part at this critical juncture, so that we may yet be able to retrieve what we have lost and achieve our national liberation. Let the Supreme Executive of the Congress call upon the nation to resume the struggle. We shall then fall in line with them in that great and noble task. Unity within the Congress could be achieved on the basis of a dynamic programme of national struggle. And we can then make a desperate attempt to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity on a permanent and enduring basis. When Europe is in the melting-pot, who can withstand the united demand of three hundred and fifty millions of Indians. Freedom is now almost within reach. We have only to seize it with our united strength. Shall we do so?

## Act Quickly

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, May 18, 1940.

In our last issue we referred to the present international crisis in our editorial columns and we appealed to our countrymen to rise to the occasion and face the situation boldly. We also addressed an appeal to the Congress High Command and implored them to unite all Congressmen on the basis of a dynamic programme of national struggle—adding that we were prepared to play our part in this urgent and all-important task. The fundamental issue on which we had to part company with the High Command was that of national struggle and if the latter satisfy us on that point, there is nothing to prevent our joining hands with them, regardless of all our past differences and disputes. If the different parties in Great Britain could forget their past antagonisms within twenty-four hours and form a “national” cabinet, cannot Congressmen who profess to have the same political goal close up their ranks when menaced by an unprecedented crisis? If we all have a sense of honour and of patriotism we should be able to do so.

The programme of national struggle for which the Forward Bloc had stood right from its birth has by now justified itself. But for it, the Congress Working Committee would long ago have followed the path of Gandhiji and offered unconditional co-operation to the British Government. We have successfully resisted the policy of compromise and surrender and over and above that, we have launched a struggle with British Imperialism which is bound to gain in strength and volume as the days roll by.

As the crisis in Europe deepens, the Western Imperialist power will be weakened more and more. In that proportion will our task become lighter and lighter. And if British Imperialism ultimately suffers a reverse, the problem of national struggle will lose its importance. Whom shall we fight if British Imperialism ceases to be a political and military force as a result of vicissitudes in war?

It is quite on the cards that owing to the new situation that is fast developing, the problem of fighting British Imperialism will

## ACT QUICKLY

slowly but steadily usher in a complementary problem, viz., that of internal unity and consolidation. Political power that we have been aspiring after for so many decades is now within sight. How shall we seize it? And how shall we retain it when we have won it?

There is today dark uncertainty before us as to our future fate. But all this will vanish in no time, if we can achieve two things—unity among Congressmen and a Hindu-Muslim settlement. We shall then be able to win Swaraj easily and also to retain the Swaraj that we shall win.

The time at our disposal is exceedingly short and we shall have to act quickly if we are to act at all. Events are taking place in Europe with lightning speed and if we are to keep pace with the march of events, we too must be equally prompt. Let us all bestir ourselves while yet there is time. Delays are always dangerous and the more so to-day.

## Forward, Bengal!

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, June 1, 1940.

It is not generally known outside Bengal that, after the outbreak of war in Europe, Emergency Ordinances were promulgated in that province which virtually strangled public life there. In the matter of rigour and ruthlessness, the "Ordinance Raj" introduced in other provinces administered by Congress Ministries could not stand a moment's comparison with what obtained in Bengal. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee waited for nearly five months to see if the Bengal Government would alter their ways, and the latter were actually advised by influential quarters to do so, but to no avail. During these five months, the Congress Working Committee had to be approached three times for permission to start Civil Disobedience as a protest against the Ordinances.

By the middle of January, the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee reached the limit of patience and it decided to start a campaign of Civil Disobedience before the month was out. The most obnoxious feature in the "Ordinance Raj" was the banning of public meetings, demonstrations etc. throughout the province of Bengal, whereby public activities were virtually brought to a stand-still. The first public meeting in defiance of the Ordinance was convened by the writer on the 31st January at the Shradhananda Park in Calcutta. Politically-minded Bengal was bursting with excitement on that day in the expectation that wholesale arrests would be made and that the Government would endeavour to put down the movement by force.

Nothing of the sort happened. For inscrutable reasons, the Government surrendered and everything went off peacefully. From that date onward, the Ordinance was defied by the Provincial Congress Committee and its supporters all over Bengal. In consequence thereof, the 'status quo' prior to September was automatically restored and such Civil Liberty as existed in this enslaved land before the outbreak of war was recovered by the people. The magnitude of the B.P.C.C.'s success was unexpected and unprece-

dented. Arrests made by the above Ordinance were, however, comparatively few in number. But perhaps for that very reason, the success achieved by the B.P.C.C. though substantial, was not spectacular.

This is how the B.P.C.C. has behaved since January last. But what about the Gandhiites and the neo-Gandhiites, viz., our National Fronters? It is reported that the authorities banned a Gandhiite Conference in Arambagh Sub-division in Hooghly District and the local Gandhiites did not think of violating that order. In Nadia District, the neo-Gandhiites wanted to hold a meeting. But when the authorities did not permit it, they demonstrated that discretion was the better part of valour and abandoned their project. On May Day, the Provincial Trade Union Congress held a rally in Calcutta with Governmental permission, but the meeting and rally arranged by the B.P.C.C. on that very day, was done without any reference to the authorities.

In May, Bengal stood in need of a fresh spurt. The struggle for the restoration of Civil Liberty had proved successful. The attempt of reactionary elements like the Ad Hoc Committee (the creature of the Congress Working Committee), the Hindu Mahasabha and the treacherous newspapers like *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* and the *Yugantar* to down the B.P.C.C. had failed miserably. People were looking forward eagerly for a further lead.

To furnish that lead, a Special Session of the Bengal Provincial Conference was held at Dacca on the 25th and 26th May. It was indeed a brilliant idea to have convened that Conference. The number of delegates who attended was considerable, viz., nearly 600 and they all came with great alacrity. Dacca gave a wild and tumultuous reception to the President-Elect and the writer on the 25th May. The main Conference drew a vast crowd of visitors and side-shows like the Students' Conference, Workers' Conference, Kishan Conference and Women's Conference were also successful. Everybody returned from Dacca with hope, confidence and buoyant expectation.

What was it that inspired those who attended the Dacca Conference? It was the bold and clear lead given there. The call of Dacca was a call for the intensification of the struggle and the widening of the fighting front. But it was not an appeal addressed to subject race. The Indian scene having changed beyond recognition during the last few months, the clarion-call was

sent out to a people who had regained their self-respect and self-confidence and had begun to think, feel and act in terms of an independent nation.

The Conference, therefore, urged the people to cast off and demolish all emblems of political servitude which militated against the newly awakened consciousness of Free India. The Holwell Monument in Calcutta which advertises the slavery of the Bengalis in the very heart of the city must now go. So also must disappear another symbol of our subjection, viz., political prisoners in jail and in restraint. And all this as a prelude to wiping out from the face of Free and Fair India all the stain of the past two centuries.

The Dacca Conference struck another much-needed note of warning to the Indian people. With kings and kingdoms toppling down overnight, power appeared to be within sight and within reach. To seize that power and to retain it for all time, national unity and national solidarity seemed essential and indispensable. An appeal was, therefore, made for the restoration of unity within the Congress and for a lasting solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem. In a word, the direction of the Provincial Conference was "Struggle and Unite"—struggle against alien Imperialism and unite among yourselves—if you want to win freedom and preserve it.

All this great and noble endeavour has to be made under the rallying-cry of "All power to the Indian people." "All or none" is to be our principle and there is no room for compromise or half-way halt.

## Is It Fair?

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, June 8, 1940.

If even the devil is entitled to its due, why not the Forward Bloc? Our friends of the Right and of the Left have been criticising us incessantly for not doing this and for failing to achieve that. But do they ever stop to consider what tremendous odds we have had to contend against? Have they ever condescended to lend us a helping hand? Far from doing so, they have on the contrary, done much to frustrate our activities. We would not be either wrong or guilty of exaggeration if we were to charge them with actual sabotage. In the arduous task of launching a national struggle and of intensifying it and widening its scope—no help, no sympathy has come either from the Gandhites, or the Radical Leaguers or the Congress Socialist or the National Fronters. The Kishan Sabha of Swami Sahajanand and Prof. Ranga and the Forward Bloc have had to depend entirely on their own resources. If the above-mentioned parties of the Right and of the Left had at least chosen to remain neutral, we would have thanked our Stars. But deliberate hostility is what we have met with in many quarters. Before we launched the struggle, we were often accused of criticising the Congress High Command and not doing something off our own bat. When the struggle was initiated this accusation was turned into ridicule. The struggle was pooh-poohed and people were told that it would never be effected without the active participation of the Gandhites. No attempt was, however, made to persuade the latter to fall in line with us.

Strangely enough, whenever our comrades were arrested and incarcerated, we were told that that was no mass-struggle. At best, it was a Gandhian form of struggle. When they were not arrested in large numbers, as in Bengal, we were told that everything was quiet and no fight was on. And on top of all this wonderful reasoning, there was banter and ridicule.

Let us, however, take stock of our achievements in a thoroughly cool and dispassionate manner. In the first place, we may perhaps



claim that we have so far prevented a compromise with British Imperialism as well as co-operation with the British Government in the prosecution of the war. One can easily imagine where the High Command would have landed the country by now, but for our persistent anti-compromise campaign. Secondly, we may perhaps claim that we have been able to create an atmosphere of struggle in the country and particularly within the ranks of Congressmen. Despite the fact that during the last eighteen months, Mahatma Gandhi has been consistently opposed to the idea of launching a national struggle—despite the fact that as early as September, 1939, he was in favour of offering cooperation to British in the prosecution of the war, we find that today the Congress Working Committee is ordering the Congress organisations to convert themselves into "Satyagraha" Committees and is instructing the "leaders" in the different Provinces to get into shirts and shorts and begin drilling. Would this strange metamorphosis have been possible if there had been no Forward Bloc in the country and if the Anti-Compromise Conference had not been held at Ramgarh in March, 1940?

Last but not least, we may perhaps claim that we have actually launched a national struggle with such strength and resources as we command. Eight members of the All-India Working Committee of the Forward Bloc are in prison today. Innumerable friends and co-workers in different parts of the country are behind the bars. In Bihar and U.P. the campaign is in full swing. In Bengal, the first phase of the struggle over the issue of civil liberty has seen the virtual surrender of the Bengal Government. Many of the war ordinances have been nullified since our struggle was launched and in consequence thereof the status quo prior to September, 1939, has been restored in a very large measure. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee is now preparing for the second phase of the struggle, after the inspiring lead given by the Dacca session of the Provincial Conference held on the 25th and 26th May last.

It always takes time to develop a non-violent mass struggle in a vast country like India and the effort needed is not a small one. But the task becomes a thousand times more difficult when there is deliberate hostility on the part, not only of Rightists, but also of so-called Leftists. Then there are non-Congress and anti-Congress organisations whose opposition has also to be faced by us and overcome. And to crown all, there is the Colossus of British Imperia-

lism with its allies, both British and Indian, that we have to combat with. Considering the obstacles we have to overcome and the tremendous odds we have to contend against, we have not done badly at all. Despite hostility, banter and ridicule, our movement will gather strength and volume as the days roll by. Let those who will not help, have the kindness to at least remain neutral. Whatever results we may actually achieve or however unworthy we may be as individuals there can be no doubt whatsoever that our cause is sublime and our endeavour noble. If we win—if our object is fulfilled—it is the country that will gain, and not we as individuals. Soldiers on the march! If we cannot agree about our methods and tactics, can we not agree to differ? And can we not have charity enough to respect one another's motives and wish one another well?

# *A Provisional National Government*

Full text of a statement issued from Kurseong, on June 8, 1940.

The recent statement of His Excellency the Viceroy, the utterance of the Commander-in-Chief and the moves of the Provincial Governors have made it perfectly clear that at long last the British Government are going to make a really serious effort to exploit India for Britain's war purposes and this effort will be made without satisfying India's demand for Independence.

Personally, I am of the opinion that the British Government have felt emboldened to adopt this new policy because of the recent utterances of Mahatma Gandhi wherein he has stated clearly and unambiguously that India should not embarrass Great Britain in her hour of danger. This view is endorsed not only by Gandhian leaders but also by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It would, therefore, be not wrong to infer that the Congress Working Committee is indirectly responsible for the new policy of British Imperialism in India.

So far as I can judge, the British Government will not easily slacken their efforts in that direction. Consequently, for all those who stand by the War Resolution of the Haripura Congress, a serious situation has arisen. I have no doubt that if the armed forces of Great Britain happen to suffer more reverses in future, the British will inevitably fall back on India more and more, regardless of what Indian public opinion may declare.

But what interest can we have in European affairs, so long as India remains enslaved? We want our Independence and that too without delay. Promises made by the Government to be fulfilled at some future date will fall flat on our people. We shall judge the British in the light of what we shall get here and now. We have had enough experience of political promises that are made only to be broken. Let not the Government try to bluff us once again with high-sounding pledges.

Short-sightedness has been the character of British foreign policy in recent years. It is this, more than anything else, which has brought

disaster to Great Britain. I am afraid that the same short-sightedness is still hanging to the coat-tails of British politicians. They are thinking of saving Britain now with the help of India. But how can an enslaved India save England, or any country for the matter of that?

India has first to save herself. And she can save herself only if the Hindus and Muslims put forward a joint demand for a provisional national government to whom all powers should be immediately transferred. This is the procedure followed in every revolutionary crisis in history. This provisional national government at the Centre can fit into the existing constitution with certain consequential changes made in the Government of India Act of 1935. But the provisional national government must have full sovereign power. After a time, when the present crisis flows over, the provisional national government, free from British control, will convene a Constituent Assembly for framing a detailed constitution of India in keeping with her new status of Independence.

The first task of the provisional national government will be to arm the Indian people as fully as possible and also to enter into alliances with friendly foreign powers, so that India's safety may be completely ensured under all circumstances. If these measures are adopted, we need not be afraid of internal chaos any more, nor should we be afraid of any untoward consequences accruing to India as a result of the military success of the Nazis in Europe. When India is free and strong enough to save herself, she can lend a helping hand to other friendly countries.

The immediate duty of Indians is, therefore, to stand up for the slogan—"all power to the Indian people"—and make an immediate demand for a provisional national government vested with full sovereign powers. This demand can be made irresistible if it be a joint demand put forward by the Hindus and Muslims of India. Can the Congress and the Muslim League agree on this issue? If they can, then they will save India once for all.

If unfortunately, this demand is turned down, we shall have no other option but to invite the Indian masses to the path of struggle.

I respectfully warn the British Government not to seek to exploit India's resources while India remains enslaved. Let them be not led astray by the soothing words of Mahatma Gandhi or of any Gandhian leader or leaders. When these leaders talk of compromise and co-operation, they do not represent Indian public opinion or the Indian masses. The suggestion now being made in some quarters

that because of Nazi success the present war has ceased to be an imperialist war, is a puerile one and will not deceive any intelligent person in this country.

In conclusion, I would request the British Government to coolly consider what consequences will follow if they endeavour to save Britain with the resources of an enslaved India. This path will not bring salvation to England—but it may bring further disaster to India. A free, strong and united India will not only save herself unaided from every conceivable danger—but may also bring succour to other friendly nations, including Britain. If British politicians still continue to be bankrupt, despite all our passionate appeals, we shall be no party to the new policy being adopted by the Government of India, regardless of what Mahatma Gandhi may say or do.

## Long Live Deshbandhu

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, June 15, 1940.

Fifteen long years have passed since Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das left this world of ours. He did not live to see his dream of a free India fulfilled, but he did achieve success in some of his immediate plans. Just when people had begun expecting greater things from him, death laid its cruel hand on him. He had won the confidence of his countrymen in an unmeasured degree and they had enthroned him in their hearts. Hence the mourning over his death was as universal as it was sincere. But while grieving over his untimely demise, we should not forget that he died in a blaze of glory. He was not one of those unfortunate beings who outlive the period of their greatness and linger on until life begins to ebb away, turning them into reactionaries.

To-day, on the eve of the anniversary of his death, there is one thought uppermost in our minds—"Oh, friend of the Nation! in this hour of trial and tribulation, India hath need of thee." We want more than ever before, that rare combination of Idealism and Realism which constitutes the essence of leadership and which was the secret of his greatness. We want that unbounded love which made him a friend of the people and which drew the Muslims and the backward classes so close to him.

We want that dynamism which would not let him rest and which drove him from struggle to struggle. We want, above all, that all-consuming passion for liberty which is the source of all inspiration and the main-spring of all activity.

Let us pay our annual tribute of respect and gratitude to his hallowed memory. Those who want to be great, have to begin life by worshipping greatness wherever they find it. Those who desire to become heroes should first learn to do hero-worship. Hence the annual function on the 16th of June is a much-needed one and all sections of the people should rally together on the occasion.

The writer was a devoted disciple of the Deshbandhu and when speaking of the departed great, it is difficult for him to do so with restraint. The debt he owes him is one that cannot be repaid. In fact, Deshbandhu's teachings have become a part of his very being.

## After Paris

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, June 15, 1940.

When the Nazi hordes crossed the German frontier into Holland and Belgium only the other day with the cry of "*nach Paris*" on their lips, who could have dreamt that they would reach their objective so soon? A miracle in military warfare has happened, as it were, before our eyes and for an analogy, one has to turn to the Napoleonic wars or to the catastrophe at Sedan in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Whatever the French High Command may say in the face of mechanised transport, innumerable tanks and dive-bombers, no resistance worth the name is possible after the capitulation of Paris. The days of trench warfare are over.

But what next? It is clear that Reynaud's Government will not make a separate peace with Germany, leaving Great Britain in the lurch. But how long will he be able to retain the confidence of the French people? The fall of his Cabinet, a tempting offer from Germany and Italy, a new Cabinet ready to make peace on those terms—these are events not altogether beyond the domain of possibility. The British Premier, Mr. Winston Churchill, made an ominous reference to this in his historic speech the other day.

And England? What is she likely to do, with or without France? The answer to this question could be furnished by that inexplicable factor—"the public morale." Unfortunately, the morale of the British people has been badly shaken and the speeches of the Premier and of other Ministers give ample proof of it. Why should it be necessary to tell the British people that they should not go about with long faces as if they were at a funeral? Why should it be necessary to tell the world that even if Great Britain is overrun by the Nazis, the Empire will go on fighting and in God's good time, the New World will come to the rescue of the Old World? The British people are famous for their dogged pertinacity and their unflinching nerves. They are now confronted with what is perhaps the severest ordeal in their history. Let us see how they will acquit themselves.

The Nazis have performed a miracle with the help of a new military technique, invented by the younger generals and military strategists. The Allies have fallen back on their war-renowned, hoary-headed generals who have been found wanting however. Have the Nazi generals exhausted their new technique? Have the Allies any military secrets or any new technique up their sleeves? Much will depend on the answers to these two questions.

We used to hear much of the chemical preparations of the Reichswehr (German Army). Have they really perfected a new technique of chemical warfare? If they have, then we shall get evidence of it in the days to come. And it will then be seen how men's nerves behave under those new conditions. Will they collapse as the nerves of the brave Abyssinians did when attacked by Italian aircraft? Or will the soul conquer matter?

Judged from the realistic point of view, it is difficult to realise how the war can continue, if Great Britain is overrun. The United States of America cannot go beyond a certain limit in helping the Allies, lest Japan should make trouble in the Far East. And there is no hope, whatsoever, that Sir Stafford Cripps will succeed in dividing Germany and Soviet Russia. It is more than possible that there is a definite agreement between Soviet Russia on the one side and Germany and Italy on the other. If I were to make a guess as to the terms of that agreement, I should hazard a statement of this sort:

- (1) Germany will have a free hand on the Continent minus the Balkans.
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Since both Germany and Italy—and perhaps Soviet Russia now regard Great Britain as Public Enemy No. 1, it is also likely that they have a plan of carving up the British Empire. In this task they may invite Japanese help and co-operation, knowing that Japan has always cast longing eyes on the entire Archipelago from the Dutch Indies to Australia.

In this scheme of things, how and where does India stand? Let those who claim to be leaders of the Indian people answer this question.



## Come to Nagpur

Signed editorial in the *Forward Bloc*, June 15, 1940.

The second session of the All-India Conference of the Forward Bloc will meet at Nagpur on the 18th June, after or along with the meetings of the Working Committee of the Muslim League and of the Congress. Apart from the fact that it is time to hold the All-India Conference, the present crisis which is deepening and worsening from hour to hour, makes an early session imperative.

What will be the task of the Conference? No doubt we shall have to do a lot of stock-taking and heart-searching after recapitulating the events of the last twelve months, we shall have to ratify our present policy and programme or modify it, if necessary. But more urgent than that, is the need to determine our policy and programme *vis-à-vis* the British Government. The struggle launched at Ramgarh in March will have to be intensified and widened in its scope. Simultaneously, we shall have to work for national unity and solidarity. Those two issues will naturally raise a host of questions which will have to be answered satisfactorily.

In this connection, the statement made by Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State for India, to the London Correspondent of *The Hindustan Times* is illuminating. It reveals once again that imperialists will never learn the lessons of history. This statement was made when the Germans were at the gates of Paris !

Confronted with danger at home, the British Government now want to fall back on India and her resources. As if an Enslaved India, impoverished and exploited, can save Imperialist England in the present crisis ! With a leadership that is seized with mental and moral paralysis and is determined not to embarrass British Imperialism, the outlook for India is indeed gloomy.

But are we to throw up our hands in despair? Our comrades in prison are looking through the barred windows on the world outside. What shall we say to them?

The imperialist offensive against the Forward Bloc, in Bengal and outside, is becoming more and more ruthless. Simultaneously,

## COME TO NAGPUR

War Committees are being formed throughout the country for exploiting enslaved India for war-purposes. Confronted with such an unprecedented crisis in our own history, we say to our imperialist rulers with a full sense of responsibility:—"We have accepted your challenge. You may do your worst but you will not succeed in resisting our march to Liberty."

# The Nagpur Address

Presidential Address at the second session of the All-India Forward Bloc Conference held at Nagpur, June 18, 1940.

COMRADES,

Early in May, 1939, the Forward Bloc of the Indian National Congress was inaugurated in Calcutta following a momentous session of the All-India Congress Committee. In the last week of June, 1939, the first session of the All-India Conference of the Forward Bloc was held in Bombay and the Constitution and Programme of the Bloc were adopted there. Since then, a year has rolled by—a year which will be memorable not only in the history of India, but in the history of the whole world. We are, therefore, meeting at a most opportune moment and not a day too soon. We shall have to do a great deal of heart-searching as well as stock-taking. We shall then have to determine our course of action in the crisis which has overtaken India and the world—the crisis which is deepening and worsening, not only from day to day but also from hour to hour.

The first question which I shall pose before you is: "Have our policy and line of action been a correct one? And have we acted in the best interests of the country by launching the Forward Bloc?" To that my reply is: "Most certainly, yes." I shall remind you that we were constrained to start the Forward Bloc in the light of four considerations. The Right-wing had definitely told us that they would not work in co-operation with the Leftists in future and they had rejected the proposal of a Composite Cabinet which was our demand. Secondly, Mahatma Gandhi and the Right-wing had told us that a national struggle in the near future was out of the question. Thirdly, the attempt to consolidate the anti-imperialist and radical elements in the Congress under the name of the Left Bloc had been given up by the Socialists and Communists. Consequently, a further attempt at Left-consolidation could be made only by us and for that the Forward Bloc had become indispensably necessary. Fourthly, the Gandhiites or Right-wingers had already consolidated themselves under the aegis of the Gandhi Seva Sangha and any further delay on

our part would have meant the strangling of the Leftist elements in the Congress by the Rightists.

It was clear in 1939 that most of those who had entered the Congress as Leftists in 1920 and 1921 and had retained the leadership of the Congress in their hands for well-nigh two decades, had ceased to be revolutionary or even radical. Any further political progress under such circumstances presupposed a consolidation of all anti-imperialist, radical and progressive forces in the country and particularly in the Congress.

Towards the end of April, 1939, when I was seriously considering the idea of resigning the Presidentship of the Congress and inaugurating the Forward Bloc, I had an interesting and important discussion with a very prominent Leftist leader of the Congress who had since then thrown himself into the arms of the Gandhites. He advised me to refrain from either course and he added that since an international storm was brewing, we should avoid everything in the nature of a split within the Congress. I replied saying that since a war was inevitable in the near future, it was all the more necessary that the Leftists should be organised and prepared in advance, so that in the event of the Rightists developing cold feet in a war-situation, we at least could do something off our own bat. Differences had become so fundamental between the Right-wing and the Left-wing that a split, whether permanent or temporary, had become inevitable. That being the case, it was desirable that the internal crisis should come and should be transcended before the external or international crisis overtook us. I added that if I accepted my friend's advice and lay low for the present, the consequences would be far worse for us when the international crisis appeared. In such a crisis, we would never agree with the Rightists. But many people would blame us for causing a split, if we attempted to act on our own at that time. Moreover, if we did want to act independently, then we would have no organisation behind us to fall back on. Consequently, the argument of my friend only strengthened my case.

Looking back on the last twelve months, can we not claim that events have justified our policy and line of action? Barring the Kisan Sabha of Swami Sahajanand (and Prof. Ranga, Comrade Yajnik, etc.) and the Forward Bloc, who is there to stand up to the Rightists today? The Left-Consolidation Committee which came into existence in June, 1939, after the formation of the Forward Bloc, has disintegrated by now. The Royists (or Radical Leaguers),

the Congress Socialists and the Communists (or National Fronters) have in turn deserted the Left-Consolidation Committee and only the Kisan Sabha and the Forward Bloc have been functioning as the spearhead of the Left-Movement in this country. This was evident when we held the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference at Ramgarh in March, 1940. There we found that the Royists, Congress Socialists and National Fronters boycotted that Conference and threw in their lot with the Gandhites.

There can be little doubt today that if there had been no Forward Bloc and no Kisan Sabha, no voice would have been raised against the policy and line of action pursued by the Gandhites during the last twelve months.

We shall consider another question: "What has been our actual achievement during the past year?"

In the first place, we can claim to have successfully resisted the tendency towards constitutionalism and compromise within the ranks of the Congress. Thanks to our efforts, the Congress ministries had to vacate office as a protest against the policy of the British Government. If they had not done so, they would have been carrying out the War-policy of the Government of India, as agents of British Imperialism. In spite of all efforts made hitherto, no compromise has yet been made with the British Government and for this, we can legitimately claim some credit.

Secondly, we have so far frustrated all attempts to secure the co-operation of the Congress in the prosecution of the War. Friends will remember that in September, 1939, when His Excellency the Viceroy invited Mahatma Gandhi for a talk at Simla on the War-situation, the latter gave out that he was of the view that India should give unconditional help to Great Britain during the present war. This was reiterated by Mahatmaji in a Press-statement issued soon after the above interview. Nevertheless, upto now, the Congress Working Committee, which usually follows Gandhiji blindly, has ignored his views on such an all-important issue. Would the same thing have happened if there had been no Kisan Sabha and no Forward Bloc?

Thirdly, we can perhaps claim that we have succeeded in creating an atmosphere of struggle. Today, we find Congress leaders drilling in shirts and shorts and Congress Committees being converted into "Satyagraha" Committees. Moreover, the Rightist leaders have been constantly talking of a struggle. Would all these have taken place,

if there had been no Forward Bloc and if the Anti-Compromise Conference at Ramgarh had not shown which way the wind of public opinion was blowing? There is no doubt that today the talk of a struggle is everywhere in the air and the more our people talk of it, the more will they move away from a compromise.

Lastly, we can claim that at Ramgarh we launched our struggle with such strength and resources as we possessed. During the last three months, a large number of our fellow-workers, including men of outstanding influence in the country, have been arrested and incarcerated. Nine members of the All-India Working Committee of the Forward Bloc are at present in prison or internment. In addition to them, leaders of the Kisan Sabha headed by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Prof. Ranga and others, are behind the bars.

The national struggle we launched at Ramgarh has been steadily gaining in strength and volume. The campaign has made considerable headway in Bihar and the United Provinces. In Bengal, the struggle was launched as early as January, 1940, over the question of civil liberty, which had been violated by the drastic ordinances promulgated by the Government in September, 1939. Thanks to the civil disobedience movement launched by the Bengal Congress, we have restored in a large measure the "status quo" which existed prior to September, 1939. The special Session of the Bengal Provincial Political Conference which met at Dacca on the 25th and 26th May, 1940, took stock of the situation in the Province and formulated a plan for intensifying the struggle and widening its scope. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee will give effect to this plan.

Before I proceed to deal with the international situation, I shall refer to one or two criticisms which are constantly levelled at us. We are told, for instance, that we have created a split in the Congress. The fact, however, is that it is the Gandhites who have created a split by refusing to co-operate with the Leftists. We have all along been strongly in favour of joint action and a composite cabinet for ensuring such action.

We are also told that we have brought disruption within the ranks of the Leftists. But it is not we who have caused disruption or disunity. The Royists, the Congress Socialists and the National Frontiers (or Communists)—have, one after another, deserted the Left-Consolidation Committee. We stand today exactly where we did twelve months ago. During these months, we have passed through an ordeal. Suffering, persecution, banter, ridicule—such has been

our lot. But we have gone ahead along the path of uncompromising struggle in a most unflinching manner. Numerous fellow-workers of ours have been persecuted by the Congress High Command and in the Province of Bengal, owing to the disaffiliation of the Provincial Congress Committee, all Congressmen of our way of thinking have been virtually thrown out of the Congress.

The question which will naturally arise at this stage is: "Why have the Royists and others deserted us?" So far as I can judge, they are afraid of being expelled from the Congress and they feel perhaps, that once outside the Congress, they will be completely lost. What amuses me, however, is that these comrades had been hoping to fight the Rightists and had not anticipated that before being defeated by the Leftists, the Rightists would do their worst and would do all in their power to maintain their supremacy in the Congress. The backbone, the stamina and the toughness that are needed in order to fight the Rightists successfully—these Leftists (or shall I say pseudo-Leftists?) comrades do not possess. We are now passing through a phase of our struggle when history itself will put all of us to the test and declare to the world as to who the genuine Leftists in India are.

We are also told that without the help of the Gandhiites, the struggle we have launched will prove to be a failure. To this allegation, our answer is as follows. It is too early to say whether our struggle will be successful or not. That will depend on whether the masses will join it or not. It always takes some time to get the masses to rally round the banner of a non-violent struggle. Let us, therefore, hold ourselves in patience yet a while.

But, supposing for argument's sake that the struggle will fail does that mean that it should not have been launched? Could we not argue, on the opposite side, that the campaigns of 1921, 1930 and 1932 should not have been launched because they had not brought us Swaraj? Failures are often the pillars of success. So what does it matter if we fail for the fourth time! Not to try at all is more dishonourable than making the attempt and failing to achieve success. The whole world is watching us today. What will the free nations of the world think of us if we miss the golden opportunity that has now come—an opportunity that is rare in the lifetime of every nation? But nobody will think ill of us if we fight and then fail.

There is another point which we should not overlook either. Shall we not consider what posterity will think of us twenty or

fifty years hence, if we do not acquit ourselves manfully today? What do people today think of the leaders who mismanaged the affairs of the country between 1914 and 1919? I, therefore, make bold to say that if we do not rise to the occasion and join the struggle without delay, neither history nor posterity will ever pardon us.

Twelve months ago when the Forward Bloc was formed we were obsessed, as it were, with the idea of the coming struggle and how to prepare for it in advance. At that time we did not know how far, if at all, outside events and international developments would aid us in our efforts to win Purna Swaraj. Consequently, we had to make "self-reliance" our motto in life and action. Today, the situation has altered to some extent. In the war between rival Imperialisms, the old ones have been faring very badly indeed. During the last few weeks the Germans have carried on the campaign with lightning rapidity. Kings and kingdoms have toppled down in the course of a few days and the German Army—the Reichswehr—has proceeded to the gates of Paris and occupied that queen of cities in a way which appears to the lay-man as a miracle in military warfare. What has been happening in Europe in a kaleidoscopic manner has had its inevitable repercussion on India. With every blow that she receives in Europe, the imperialist might of Britain is bound to loosen its grip on India and other dependencies. The wheels of history are grinding on, quite regardless of what we may be doing in India. Even a child should, therefore, understand that in order to win Purna Swaraj under the altered conditions of today, we need much less effort and sacrifice than we did twelve months ago. But in order to fully utilise the opportunity which international events have presented to us, we must have sufficient unity and solidarity among ourselves. If India could speak with one voice today, our demand would indeed be well-nigh irresistible. It follows, as a consequence, that while we should think of intensifying the national struggle and widening its scope, we should at the same time try to develop national unity and solidarity to the maximum limit. But a struggle is needed in any case. Without it, our rulers may not easily bend. We know from experience that imperialists never learn the lessons of history. Further, our own leaders may be induced to go in for a compromise with British Imperialism if the Leftist pressure, exerted through a national struggle, is withdrawn. You will, therefore, have to consider what steps you should immediately take in order to intensify and widen the struggle and simultaneously



to develop national unity and solidarity. National unity will presuppose unity within the Congress on the basis of a dynamic programme of struggle and at the same time unity between the Congress and other organisations like the Muslim League.

If we can develop sufficient unity and solidarity among ourselves in good time, we may very well hope that even if the country passes through a struggle and even if catastrophic events take place in Europe, the transference of power from the hands of British Imperialism to those of the Indian people will take place in a peaceful manner. It is not necessary that the Indian revolution should be a bloody one or that it should pass through a period of chaos. On the contrary, it is desirable that it should be as peaceful as possible and a peaceful transition can be ensured if the people are united and are determined to have their freedom.

My own suggestion to you is that we should immediately go out into the country with the rallying-cry—"All power to the Indian people." This will galvanise the masses in a moment. In order to put forward this demand in an effective and irresistible manner, we should leave no stone unturned in our effort to attain national unity. This effort will necessitate the setting up of a machinery which will preserve harmony and goodwill among the people under all circumstances. Such a machinery will be provided by a Citizens' Defence Corps organised on an all-party basis. But such a Corps should be quite independent of the Government and will not work for the safeguarding of an enslaved India. Our Citizens' Defence Corps will only aim at preserving internal peace, harmony and goodwill. The question of defending the country militarily from any other force or power is one which should concern the Government only and not the people, so long as India remains subjugated. What interest can we have in fighting for the perpetuation of our slavery, for that is exactly what is implied in fighting to defend an enslaved India.

Before coming to the epilogue of this address, which will be a consideration of the international situation of today and tomorrow, I should like to remind you of the historical role of the Forward Bloc. The Bloc has come into being as the result of historical necessity. It is not the creation of an individual or of a group of individuals. So long as it will serve a historical purpose, it will live and thrive—despite all obstacles, internal or external. We should also bear in mind that the Forward Bloc will have a role to play in the post-struggle phase of our history. It will have to preserve

liberty after winning it and it will have to build up a new India and a happy India on the basis of the eternal principles of Liberty, Democracy and Socialism. Let us not commit the fatal mistake of thinking that our mission will be over, once we win our freedom. The organisation or party that wins freedom must undertake the responsibilities of post-war reconstruction. Only in this manner will continuity of progress be maintained.

Let us now proceed to consider the international situation as we find it today and as it will probably be tomorrow. After reading the outspoken statements of Messrs. Winston Churchill and Paul Reynaud we cannot blink the prime facts of the situation as they emerge from the quick tempo of war. Everyday makes it more clear that M. Paul Reynaud's summing up of the situation in the Chamber of Deputies (that victory of the Allies could only be brought about by a miracle) was a true measure of the military conditions then obtaining. Dark as was the picture then, it has grown darker since. The prospect today is positively bleak. And when one remembers this is a totalitarian war, it dawns on us how impossible is the situation in which the losing side is placed.

We may also concede that Monsieur Reynaud's ringing resolution "to intensify the struggle . . . and not to give up" is brave and resolute, and his words not empty heroics. For all that, he fails to convince when he says: "We will shut ourselves into one of our Provinces and if we are driven out we will go to North Africa and if necessary into our possessions in America."

That is hardly the way to carry a war through to victory. If the Allies lose their foothold in Europe, they may conceivably fight on in Africa, in Asia, even in America; but it is for the ultimate aim of victory, useless.

Today we have every right to examine the stark realities of the War as it has developed until we see them in the white light of clarity. The leaders of the French and British peoples have been frank. We should also be frank with ourselves.

The cause of the Allies' continuous defeat seems to-day lodged somewhere in their system. It was a system which Mr. Clement Attlee, speaking, I believe, for the last time from the Opposition benches, said had failed to meet the needs of the crisis. It was the fundamental weakness of a system in which slavery and freedom existed side by side that had resulted in Britain being "decisively beaten" on the propaganda front. This was what the *Daily Mail* said was happen-

ing. Propaganda radiocasts from the Reich, it wrote at the end of March, were "influencing not only the civilian population of Britain, but also our armed forces . . ." "Goebbels" it asserted, "has had a walk-over."

But we are not so much interested in a particular method as in the basic principles of action. And we are not to be dissuaded from pressing home our demand for the admission of our fundamental rights by a clouding of the issues and cry of "saboteur"! We have too long been taken in by the cleverest Imperialist propaganda.

We cannot but ask ourselves where we stand in this international flux. Following the sombre thoughts of Allied statesmen and strategists, we cannot but ask ourselves what we should do if British resistance collapses. This is by no means impossible. In fact, the Premier, Mr. Churchill has already talked in terms of defeat for Britain. He talked much earlier in the strain in which Premier Reynaud has now talked—of dispersing to the far ends of the Empire to carry on the struggle. Some of our statesmen, it seems, have been possessed with the dream of India being converted into a bastion of democratic resistance against the dictators' hordes. What a grotesque picture!

Almost the whole of the English Channel coast on the French side is in the hands of the Germans, making ordinary communications difficult and hazardous and the transport of troops all but impossible. Some of the best industrial regions of France are in the hands of the invaders. Paris, the heart of France, has ceased to throb. In the Champagne region a powerful German drive is developing to isolate the Maginot Line from the rest of France. In the South-East the powerful and fresh Italian legions are pressing, and everywhere the retreating French forces are harried by the admittedly superior air-arm of the admittedly superior Reichswehr. Such is the gloomy picture of the Allied position in Europe. From the Northern Arctic regions to the Atlantic, the Nazi eagle has spread its wings in an unbroken line. It is not surprising we should be told that there is no cause for optimism.

When the Nazi hordes crossed the German frontier into Holland and Belgium only the other day with the cry of "*nach Paris*" on their lips, who could have dreamt that they would reach their objective so soon? A miracle in military warfare has happened, as it were, before our eyes and for an analogy, one has to turn to the Napoleonic wars or to the catastrophe at Sedan in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870.

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But what next? It is clear that Reynaud's Government will not make a separate peace with Germany, leaving Great Britain in the lurch. But how long will he be able to retain the confidence of the French people? The fall of his Cabinet, a tempting offer from Germany and Italy, a new Cabinet ready to make peace on those terms—these are events not altogether beyond the domain of possibility. The British Premier, Mr. Winston Churchill, made an ominous reference to this in his historic speech the other day.

And England? What is she likely to do, with or without France? The answer to this question could be furnished by that inexplicable factor—"the public morale." Unfortunately, the morale of the British people has been badly shaken and the speeches of the Premier and of other Ministers give ample proof of it. Why should it be necessary to tell the British people that they should not go about with long faces as if they were at a funeral? Why should it be necessary to tell the world that even if Great Britain is overrun by the Nazis, the Empire will go on fighting and in God's good time, the New World will come to the rescue of the Old World? The British people are famous for their dogged pertinacity and their unflinching nerves. They are now confronted with what is perhaps the severest ordeal in their history. Let us see how they will acquit themselves.

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Judged from the realistic point of view, it is difficult to realise how the war can continue, if Great Britain is overrun. The United States of America cannot go beyond a certain limit in helping the Allies, lest Japan should make trouble in the Far East. And there is no hope, whatsoever, that Sir Stafford Cripps will succeed in dividing Germany and Soviet Russia. It is more than probable that there is a definite agreement between Soviet Russia on one side and Germany and Italy on the other. If I were to make a guess as to the terms of that agreement, I should hazard a statement of this sort:

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Since both Germany and Italy—and perhaps Soviet Russia—now regard Great Britain as Public Enemy No. 1, it is also likely that they have a plan of carving up the British Empire. In this task they may invite Japanese help and co-operation, knowing that Japan has always cast longing eyes on the entire Archipelago, from the Dutch Indies right up to Australia.

Such being the situation, if Britain cannot save herself and her Empire from the German-Italian attack, it would be idle to expect, like Mr. Churchill, that the Empire would save itself and Britain on the top of it. Let us, therefore, cease talking of saving Britain with the Empire's help or with India's help. India must in this grave crisis think of herself first. If she can win freedom now and then save herself, she will best serve the cause of humanity. It is for the Indian people to make an immediate demand for the transference of power to them through a Provisional National Government. No constitutional difficulties can be put forward by the British Government with a view to resisting this demand, because legislation for this purpose can be put through Parliament in twenty-four hours. When things settle down inside India and abroad, the Provisional National Government will convene a Constituent Assembly for framing a full-fledged Constitution for this country.

## THE NAGPUR ADDRESS

Friends, these are some of my thoughts and suggestions today. I hope and trust that you will give them due consideration. In any case, I appeal to you not to leave Nagpur till you have in your pockets a concrete plan of action for winning Purna Swaraj in the immediate future.

Let us proclaim once again—"All power to the Indian people, here and now."

## Task Before the Country

The following statement was published in the *Forward Bloc* on June 29, 1940.

The world situation is in such a state of flux that one can notice a tendency in some quarters to stop thinking and to drift with the tide of events. But we should not forget that what has happened or is happening is not fortuitous in character but is the result of careful planning and preparation. For us, it would be a fatal mistake to suppose that simply because the situation is favourable for the attainment of our political goal, Swaraj will drop into our hands like a ripe fruit.

Since I left Calcutta ten days ago, I have met a number of India's foremost politicians and leaders, besides representatives of the Forward Bloc from different provinces. I have endeavoured in my talks to put forward the policy and programme of the Forward Bloc and to obtain light for myself in return. Though I cannot claim to have discovered an all-round agreement, I have certainly found to my pleasant surprise many points of agreement. As a result thereof, I have returned with a clearer perception of the task that is ahead of us.

In the first place, we should lose no time in putting forward a joint demand before the British Government for the immediate transference of power to the Indian people through a Provisional National Government. This demand is bound to be irresistible if the Indian people speak with one voice on this occasion. We should not be lured by promises or even by a partial transference of power now, because our slogan clearly is—"All power to the Indian People."

A national cabinet at the Centre should be accompanied by national cabinets in the provinces. The latter will naturally owe allegiance to the former. Moreover, they will ensure internal peace and harmony during the transitional period and will pave the way to a lasting Hindu-Muslim settlement. I feel convinced that the Hindu-Muslim problem is not insoluble. But its solution will come if we begin to concentrate on practical, concrete issues and if we do not waste our time or energy over issues that are theoretical or

abstract in character. Co-operation between Hindus and Muslims wherever that is immediately possible will inevitably widen the sphere of such co-operation in future.

A moot point in this connection is as to whether we should try the experiment of national cabinets in the provinces even if we cannot set up a national cabinet at the Centre just now. To this query, my answer is "Yes." In the present dynamic situation, national cabinets in the provinces will be a great help not only in maintaining internal harmony, not only in establishing Hindu-Muslim unity—but also in winning power at the Centre—should there be obstacles in the path of attaining Swaraj.

We should also push on with our scheme of a Citizens' Defence Corps. But it is necessary to explain to the public that this Corps will be quite independent of the British Government. Its task will be merely to help in maintaining internal peace, harmony and goodwill, so that Indians may not quarrel or fight among themselves at the time when they should concentrate on winning freedom for India.

In this connection, I should emphasise our conviction that we should not slacken in any way the struggle that we launched at Ramgarh. We do not believe that Swaraj will come automatically and without a struggle. The moment the struggle is abandoned, the atmosphere will be vitiated and the tendency towards compromise with Imperialism will again rear its head. We have, therefore, resolved to intensify the struggle we have commenced and to widen its scope.

In this fateful hour, when history is being created before our very eyes, what is needed most of all is that we should think of India and India alone—and not of parties or sectarian interests. No sacrifice on the part of any individual or party should be regarded as too great if only it serves the cause of India's emancipation.



## Holwell Monument

An article in the *Forward Bloc*, June 29, 1940.

There has been unavoidable delay in bringing out this issue. In fact, we have been forced to miss one week, thanks to the kind attentions of the Government of Bengal. Our office was searched and our security was forfeited. Fresh security to the tune of Rs. 2000 had to be deposited before we could bring out the next issue.

This has been all to the good. It has put our back up. We have, therefore, to push on with our plan of work and put more zest and more zeal into it. The campaign against the Holwell Monument, which was the mandate of the Bengal Provincial Conference, has to be taken up at once. The third July, 1940, is going to be observed in Bengal as the Sirajuddowla Day—in honour of the last independent King of Bengal. The Holwell Monument is not merely an unwarranted stain on the memory of the Nawab, but has stood in the heart of Calcutta for the last 150 years or more as the symbol of our slavery and humiliation. That monument must now go.

On the 3rd of July next will commence the campaign against that monument and the writer has decided to march at the head of the first batch of volunteers on that day.

The second session of the All-India Conference of the Forward Bloc met at Nagpur on the 18th and 19th June. The Conference was a great success and a number of important resolutions were passed. The proceedings of the Conference have influenced public opinion throughout the country, including the mind of the Congress Working Committee, which was meeting simultaneously. Nagpur has virtually repeated the call of Dacca. The decisions at Nagpur may be summarised in the following manner.

- (1) Intensify the struggle and widen its scope under the slogan—  
“All power to the Indian people.”
- (2) Demand from the British Government immediate transference of full power to the Indian people through a provisional national government.

- (3) Work simultaneously for national unity and particularly for Hindu-Muslim unity.
- (4) Organise Citizens' Defence Corps on a non-party basis with a view to preserving internal unity and solidarity during the transitional period.

Subsequent to and in furtherance of the Nagpur decisions, the writer has in a recent statement advocated the setting up of a National Cabinet at the Centre, accompanied by National Cabinets in the provinces.

The situation to-day is dynamic and in order to handle it properly, a dynamic policy is needed. History has put us to the test. Let us not be found wanting. It is for us now to make our country's future or to mar it.

## Letters From Prison

The following five letters are from among those written by Netaji during his last imprisonment. Four are to his brother Sarat Chandra Bose and the fifth to Mukundalal Sircar, an important member of the Forward Bloc.

### I

#### CENSORED AND PASSED

Illegible, 28/10

Passed

For D.C.S.B.

Illegible

30/10/40 Lt.Col., I.M.S.

*Presidency Jail,  
Calcutta,  
24.10.40.*

My dear Mejdada,

I sent you my Vijaya pranams the other day to your Dehradun address. You must have received that letter by now.

All these days I have been thinking of Moulana Abul Kalam's letter to you and incidentally of the mutual admiration indulged in by Moulana Abul Kalam and Sardar Vallabhbhai in connection with the late Mr. V. J. Patel's will.

I do not know your reaction to the first, but I am giving you mine for what it is worth. Since the next session is at hand, I do not think you should resign from the Bengal Assembly. But you may resign at a convenient time and challenge the Congress High Command to put up their best man in opposition and have a test-election. A convenient time would be the last day of the ensuing session—provided there be time for re-election to take place before the next session. The announcement regarding your resignation at a convenient time may perhaps be made at an early date.

This is, however, a small matter, comparatively speaking. What is really important is the question as to whither we are drifting—I mean the Congress. One by one, people—sometimes, important

people who have served and suffered and sacrificed—are leaving the Congress in disgust. Nothing has been done to compensate this loss by effecting alliances with other bodies, nor does there appear to be any such chance in the near future. And I do not find any new men joining the Congress.

Mahatma Gandhi probably realised that this process of disintegration would have tragic results for his party and sought to buttress himself and his followers by recanting his original attitude of unconditional co-operation and launching selective individual civil disobedience instead. But is not this an eye-wash? It is neither co-operation nor mass-struggle. It pleases nobody and will lead us nowhere. And this campaign has nothing to do with Swaraj. It can only bluff a certain section of our countrymen who are gullible into thinking that something effective is being done by Gandhiji.

One can understand co-operation. One can understand Royism, despite its inconsistencies. One can also understand mass-struggle. But what is this? Neither fish, nor flesh, nor red-herring.

This latest phase of Gandhism with its sanctimonious hypocrisy (the Patel Will affair), its outrage on democracy and its queer and ununderstandable formulae for political ills (advice to Hyderabad State subjects)—is sickening to a degree. One is forced to wonder which is a greater menace to India's political future—the British bureaucracy or the Gandhian hierarchy. Idealism that is devoid of Realism and whose only content is a frothy sentimentalism of a sanctimonious character can never be fruitful of results.

This game of bluff will deceive nobody—neither the Government nor the people—because the world at large is not as foolish as our brown hierarchy may think. We have to carry on with calm determination. The day is not far off when this brand of Gandhism will stand unmasked. I am glad that you have treated the Moulana's fiat with the contempt it deserves.

Hope all of you are improving there and particularly Mejbowdidi. When are you returning? You need not be in a hurry, for you must get well first. I find that the press people have been at you there. Are the Forward Bloc people also after you? We have very good public support in those parts.

I have been pressed to stand for the Central Assembly and I have agreed. So long.

Yours v. affly.  
SUBHAS

P.S. Some time ago I sent a telegram to Moulana at Wardha thanking him for his Vijaya present. SCB.

Sarat C. Bose Esq.,  
*Royal Hotel,*  
*Dehradun, U.P.*

## II

## CENSORED AND PASSED

Illegible 4/11  
 For D.C.S.B.

Passed  
 Illegible  
 Lt. Col., I.M.S.  
 Supdt.

*Presidency Jail,*  
*Calcutta,*  
 31.10.40.

My dear Mejdada,

You must have received my Vijaya letter and the other one which followed it. I wonder how Dehradun has benefitted Mejbowdidi and yourself. I hope it has.

You must have read in the papers about my election to the Central Assembly. I hope the Congress High Command will not fail to draw the necessary moral from it.

The more I think of Congress Politics, the more convinced I feel that in future we should devote more energy and time to fighting the High Command. If power goes into the hands of such mean, vindictive and unscrupulous persons when Swaraj is won, what will happen to the country? If we don't fight them now, we shall not be able to prevent power passing into their hands. Another reason why we should fight them now is that they have no idea of national reconstruction. Gandhism will land free India in a ditch—if free India is sought to be rebuilt on Gandhian, non-violent principles. India will then be offering a standing invitation to all predatory powers. We should concentrate on fighting the Congress High Command now and to that end, we should make alliances with other political parties wherever and whenever possible.

I have not been well during the last week owing to a pain in the abdominal region near the colon and appendix. The pain is however

less now. I am addressing this to Woodburn Park because I don't know when you will be back. With pranams.

To  
Sarat C. Bose Esq.,  
*Calcutta*

Yours v. affly.  
SUBHAS

### III

CENSORED AND PASSED  
Illegible 26/11  
For D.C.S.B.

*Presidency Jail,*  
*Calcutta,*  
15.11.40.

My dear Mejdada,

I am writing to Amiya to-day by air-mail giving him a brief account of my case and the illegality and injustice involved in it. I would like you to write him a detailed letter on the same subject by air-mail. I want Amiya to pass the information on to my friends in Parliament and outside. This could be easily done through friends in the Indian Conciliation Group, India League, etc., like Miss Agatha Harrison, Krishna Menon and others.

Any number of people would be interested greatly—if only they had the information. Take, for instance, Mr. Thurtle, M.P., Lansbury's son-in-law, who was your guest in Calcutta—or Mr. Greenwood, M.P., who is now in the Cabinet and who presided at the public reception I had in London in 1938—or Mr. Vernon Bartlett, M.P., of the *News Chronicle*, whom I first met at Sir Walter Layton's luncheon at Chronicle House and who later had tea with me in Calcutta—or Mr. Sorensen, M.P., the indefatigable questioner on Indian topics, with whom I got acquainted in London.

I do not know how long it takes air-mail letters to reach London now-a-days. In case delay appears more or less certain, please send a long cable instead.

I am telling Amiya that all that he has to do is to pass on my letter to 2 or 3 friends who will do the rest. It is not necessary for Amiya to bother about this matter any further.

Sarat C. Bose Esq.,  
1, *Woodburn Park,*  
*Calcutta*

Yours v. affly.  
SUBHAS

## IV

CENSORED AND PASSED

Illegible 20/11

For D.C.S.B.

*Presidency Jail,**Calcutta,*

17.11.40.

Urgent

My dear Mejdada,

Both of my senior Advocates have fallen ill—I mean Barada Babu and Santosh Babu. I do hope they will get well soon. My case at Alipore comes up on the 23rd inst—Barada Babu appears there. If Barada Babu is not quite well by the 23rd inst, please make some arrangement for that day.

I hope you have by now received my letters of 24/10 and 31/10. Now the second scene in the Wardha farce has begun.

I have had a pain in the waist region for the last 2 or 3 days of a sciatica type. I can still walk about freely and there is nothing to worry about so far. Hope you are all well. How is mother?

Sarat C. Bose Esq.,  
1, *Woodburn Park*,  
*Calcutta*

Passed  
Illegible  
Lt. Col., I.M.S.  
Superintendent  
Presidency Jail.

Yours v. affly.  
SUBHAS

## V

CENSORED AND PASSED

Illegible

For D.C.S.B.

Passed

Illegible

Lt. Col., I.M.S.  
Superintendent,  
Presidency Jail.

Strictly personal*Presidency Jail,*

21.11.40.

My dear Mukunda Babu,

I am glad to have your letter of the 11th November which reached my hands day-before-yesterday.

I hope you are keeping well now.

When you interviewed me in jail, I was doing well. Since then I have had an attack of sciatica, or something like it. The attack is a mild one so far—and I am doing my best to check it. I still remember the bad attacks I had in the past and have no desire to repeat the experience.

How can I give you a message from jail for friends outside, when I am not a free agent?

I have received Sardar Sardul Singh's letter and I hope he has received mine. I would have been more happy if he had not mentioned me in the telegram to Gandhiji. One is liable to be misunderstood if one does not explain himself fully—which is so difficult while in prison.

After a great deal of hesitation I am offering you some advice. This is strictly for yourself and should be regarded as confidential and not meant to be communicated to others. If I had been free, I could have issued general instructions, but I cannot do so while I am here—for this might create misunderstanding. We do not take orders from Wardha. Consequently, no matter what Gandhiji may do, you should not feel obliged to jump into the movement and court arrest. You should carry on as usual. In the past, it is we who have toiled and suffered and others have reaped the harvest. But how long will this go on?

So long.

With cordial greetings.

Sj. Mukundalal Sircar,  
37, College Street,  
Calcutta

Yours v. sincerely  
SUBHAS C. BOSE



# *My Political Testament and Other Letters to Government*

My political testament and other letters to Government from prison,  
October-December, 1940.

## I

To  
The Hon. Home Minister,  
Government of Bengal,  
through the Superintendent, Presidency Jail.

Dear Sir,

I have been in Jail for about four months under a Section of the Defence of India Rules which does not necessitate a trial by a Court of Law. Over and above that, I have been an under-trial prisoner for the last two months. Detention without trial under one section and prosecution under another Section of the above Rules—constitute a combination of executive fiat and judicial procedure which is not only unprecedented, but is manifestly illegal and unjust.

2. Further, when bail applications were made before the trying Magistrates, the Public Prosecutors opposed them, presumably under instructions from the Local Government, with the result that the applications were not granted. This is an evidence of undue governmental interference in the course of judicial proceedings. This interference is all the more objectionable because the Local Government are not giving effect to the instructions issued by the Government of India with regard to cases under the Defence of India Rules.

3. It is unfair, unjust and illegal to forcibly detain me in prison in this manner when I am being prosecuted. Once I have been produced before a Court on the charge of offending against the D. I.

Rules, the law should be allowed to take its own course. How can I again be imprisoned without trial under the same D. I. Rules?

4. It is surprising and painful that all this is happening under the aegis of a "popular" ministry. I have been watching how the self-same Ministry has been behaving in the case of citizens professing the Islamic faith—particularly when they happen to be members of the Muslim League. It is not necessary to furnish Government with the numerous relevant instances, culminating in the sudden release of the Maulvi of Murapara in Dacca District. Every single instance of this sort has been duly noted by me.

5. In view of these and numerous other considerations, Government should release me forthwith. My election to the Indian Legislative Assembly also demands that I should be permitted to attend its sittings which commence on the 5th November—of course, health permitting. If the Burma Government could allow a convicted prisoner to attend the Assembly sittings, should not the "popular" ministry of Bengal allow the same facilities to one who is not a convicted prisoner?

6. Last but not least, my continued detention in the present state of my health is nothing short of a vindictive policy on the part of Government, which is altogether inexplicable to me.

This letter is written in all seriousness and I pray that it be given the consideration it deserves.

*Presidency Jail,*  
30.10.40.

Yours faithfully,  
SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

## II

To  
The Superintendent,  
Presidency Jail.

Dear Sir,

I have addressed the Hon. Home Minister to-day on the question of my continued detention in Jail. I desire that along with that letter, Government should be informed of the consequences, for me, of their refusal to withdraw the order of detention. I am therefore writing this to you with the request that you may kindly bring the

contents to the notice of Government as confidentially as possible. I am sending it to your office under closed cover so that nobody else need see it. This letter is not a threat and I hope it will not be treated as such. It is meant to be a frank communication regarding certain developments which may soon become unavoidable for me.

I do not expect that Government will be moved by the considerations mentioned or implied in my letter to the Hon. Home Minister. I have therefore been pondering for the last two months over the course of action that I should adopt. There is no other alternative for me but to register a moral protest against an unjust act and as a proof of that protest, to undertake a voluntary fast. This fast will have no effect on the "popular" Ministry, because I am neither the Maulvi of Murapara, Dacca nor a Muhammadan by faith. Consequently, the fast will, in my case, become a fast unto death. I know that even that will not move this Government and I have no illusions on this point. The "popular" Ministry, like all bureaucratic governments, will raise the question of official prestige and the familiar argument will be trotted out that Government cannot be coerced by a fast. I was in England when Terence Macswiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, was on hunger-strike on a similar issue. The whole country was moved—all the political parties in Parliament and H. M. the King also were visibly affected, but Lloyd George's Government was adamant. As a consequence, the King had to declare publicly that because of the Cabinet's attitude, he could not exercise the Royal Prerogative. I am recounting all this just to convince you and the Government that I have examined the whole situation in the cold light of common-sense and logic and that I have not been thinking light-heartedly.

Thus while I do not expect any tangible result to follow from the fast, I shall have the satisfaction of recording a moral protest against the iniquitous action of Government. Britishers and the British Government have been talking of upholding the sacred principles of freedom and democracy, but their policy nearer home belies these professions. They want our assistance to destroy Naziism, but they have been indulging in super-Naziism. My protest will serve to expose the hypocrisy underlying their policy in this unfortunate country—as also the policy of a Provincial Government that calls itself "popular," but which, in reality, can be moved only when there is a Muhammadan in the picture. Incidentally, I shall have the further satisfaction that my fast and its sequel will have repercus-

sions outside India, for I happen to be one of the Indians known outside the frontiers of the country.

The only other point to consider is as to whether the remedy suggested is not worse than the disease and I have taken long days and nights to ponder over it. My answer to the question is that life under existing conditions is hardly worth living. In this mortal world, everything perishes except principles. These principles can live only when individuals do not hesitate to die for them. When individuals perish for a sacred principle, that principle does not die—but incarnates itself in other individuals. And it is through vicarious suffering alone that a cause can flourish and prosper. Just as flesh begets flesh—so also does spirit beget kindred spirits. Consequently, if I have anything worthy in me, neither my country nor humanity will lose as a result of my death. On the contrary, God willing, they may be elevated to a higher moral plane—for, after all, the highest sacrifice that one can make is the voluntary sacrifice of one's life, without taking the life of another.

One word more before I finish. I have been in Jail for long periods and have also been on hunger-strike before. I know all the steps that over-zealous officials sometimes take in order to frustrate the object of hunger-strike. Naturally, I shall be prepared for them in advance. Moreover, I shall not permit forced feeding. Nobody has any moral right to feed me by force. This point was thrashed out with the British Cabinet in the case of Terence Maeswiney and at a later period with the Government of India during our hunger-strike of 1926. Any circulars of Jail Code provisions which may have come into existence since then will not have any binding effect on me.

I repeat that this letter, written on the sacred day of Kali Pujah, should not be treated as a threat or ultimatum. It is merely an affirmation of one's faith, written in all humility. Hence it should be handled as a confidential document to be communicated to Government confidentially. I only desire that Government should know how my mind has been working so that they may appreciate my motives as well as the consequences, for me, of their decision.

Thanking you for your uniform courtesy.

*Presidency Jail,  
Calcutta,  
30.10.40.*

Yours faithfully,  
SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

## III

## CONFIDENTIAL AND URGENT

To  
The Superintendent,  
Presidency Jail.

Dear Sir,

I hope you have duly forwarded to Government the confidential letter I wrote to you on the 30th October last—the day of Kali Pujah. This is in continuation of that letter and both the letters are to be read in conjunction with my letter to the Hon. Home Minister of the same date, viz., 30th October.

2. Since I wrote to you, the Government of India has made it clear in connection with the adjournment motion tabled by Pandit L. K. Maitra, M.L.A. (Central), before the Indian Legislative Assembly that the responsibility for my arrest and imprisonment rests exclusively with the Government of Bengal which is claimed by its supporters to be controlled and run by a “popular” Ministry. It is also clear that the way I have been treated by this “popular” Government is unique and unprecedented in this country and violates the instructions of the Government of India relating to D.I.R. cases. It pains me to find that a “popular” Government is using the D. I. Rules not for defending India, but in order to shield a procedure that is at once illegal and unjust.

3. Yesterday, when application for bail was made by my lawyers, the trying Magistrate at Bankshall Court granted the application, but was constrained to remark that his order would remain infructuous because of the action of Government in detaining me without trial under Section 26 of the D. I. Rules. I cannot conceive of a more blatant example of interference in judicial procedure on the part of the Executive. Were the D. I. Rules enacted for defending India or for defending illegality and injustice of this sort? I wonder.

4. I am sorry that this Government has perpetrated another wrong by supplying the Secretary of State for India with incorrect information about my arrest and detention. As is already known, in reply to Mr. Sorensen’s query, the Secretary of State announced in the House of Commons on the basis of the information received by him that I had been taken into custody in connection with the

Holwell Monument affair. If the whole truth had been told, then one would have heard more on the subject in England, for I have friends there, both in Parliament and among the general public.

5. For vindication of what I consider to be a legitimate right, there is but one course open to me, viz., to content myself with recording a moral protest—since every other door has been banged on me by the “popular” Government. Consequently, as already intimated to you on the 30th October and in accordance with the vow I have prayerfully taken on Kali Pujah Day, I shall commence my fast very soon. I shall send a formal intimation to Government in due course mentioning the exact date, but that will be on the very eve of commencement of the fast. Since I wrote as far back as the 30th ultimo, Government has already had sufficient notice.

I shall be obliged if you treat this letter as confidential and kindly forward it to Government confidentially as early as possible.

*Presidency Jail,*  
14.11.40.

Yours faithfully,  
SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

#### IV

To  
H. E. the Governor of Bengal,  
The Hon. Chief Minister  
and  
The Council of Ministers.

Your Excellency and Gentlemen!

I am writing this in connection with my letter of the 30th October, 1940, addressed to the Hon. Home Minister (copy of which was forwarded to the Hon. Chief Minister) and my confidential letters to the Superintendent, Presidency Jail, dated the 30th October and 14th November, which were forwarded to Government in due course. Herein I shall recapitulate what I have to say regarding my own case and shall also put down in black and white the considerations that are impelling me to take the most fateful step in my life.

I have no longer any hope that I shall obtain redress at your hands. I shall, therefore, make but two requests, the second of which

will be at the end of this letter. My first request is that this letter be carefully preserved in the archives of the Government, so that it may be available to those of my countrymen who will succeed you in office in future. It contains a message for my countrymen and is therefore my political testament.

I was arrested without any official explanation or justification on the 2nd July, 1940, as per orders of the Government of Bengal, under Section 129 of the Defence of India Rules. The first explanation subsequently emanating from official sources—came from the Rt. Hon. Mr. Amery, Secretary of State for India, who stated in the House of Commons quite categorically that the arrest was in connection with the movement for the demolition of the Holwell Monument in Calcutta.

The Hon. Chief Minister virtually confirmed this pronouncement at a sitting of the Bengal Legislative Assembly and stated that it was the Holwell Monument Satyagraha which stood in the way of my release. When the Government decided to remove the Monument, all those who had been detained without trial in connection therewith were set free, with the exception of Mr. Narendra Narayan Chakravarti, M.L.A., and myself. These releases took place towards the end of August, 1940, and almost simultaneously an order for my permanent detention was served under Section 26 of the Defence of India Rules, in lieu of the original order under Section 129, which provided for temporary detention.

Strangely enough, with the new order under Section 26, came the news that prosecution was being launched against me under Section 38 of the D.I. Rules before two Magistrates—for three of my speeches and for a contributed article in the weekly journal *Forward Bloc*, of which I had been the Editor. Two of these speeches had been delivered in February, 1940, and the third one early in April. Thus the Government created a unique and unprecedented situation towards the end of August last by detaining me permanently without trial under one Section of the Defence of India Rules and simultaneously prosecuting me before judicial tribunals under another Section of the same Rules. I had not seen a similar combination of executive fiat and judicial procedure before this occurrence took place. Such a policy is manifestly illegal and unjust and smacks of vindictiveness, pure and simple.

One cannot fail to notice that the prosecution was launched long after the alleged offences had taken place. Nor can it be overlooked

that for the relevant article in *Forward Bloc*, the paper had already been penalised through forfeiture of the security of Rs. 500/- and deposit of a further security of Rs. 2000/-. Moreover, the attack on the paper was made all of a sudden, after a long period during which no warning had been given to the paper in accordance with the practice of Government.

The attitude of the Bengal Government was further exposed when applications for my release on bail were made before the two trying Magistrates. Both these applications were stoutly opposed by the Government spokesmen. On the last occasion, one of the Magistrates, Mr. Wali-ul-Islam granted the bail application, but was constrained to remark that this order would remain infructuous till the Government withdrew their order for my detention without trial under Section 26 of the D. I. Rules. It is thus as clear as daylight that the Government have been pursuing a policy which fetters the discretion of judicial tribunals and interferes with the administration of law. The action of the Local Government appears all the more objectionable when it is remembered that they have given the go-by to the instructions of the Government of India with regard to such cases.

Another interesting feature of the Government's policy is my simultaneous prosecution before two Magistrates. If the intention was to place more than one speech of mine before a Court of Law, that could very well have been fulfilled without resorting to two Magistrates, for I have delivered any number of speeches during the last twelve months within the limits of Calcutta proper. The man in the street is, therefore, forced to think that Government are so keen on seeing me convicted that they have provided for a second string to the legal bow.

Last but not least, Government's action appears to an impartial man to be altogether malafide, because proceedings were instituted so long after the alleged prejudicial acts had been committed. If the acts in question were in fact prejudicial, then action should have been taken by Government long ago, i.e., at the time that the alleged offences were committed.

May I request you to compare for one moment your attitude towards people like myself and towards Muslims arrested and imprisoned under the Defence of India Rules? How many cases have occurred up till now in which Muslims apprehended under the D.I. Rules have been suddenly released without rhyme or



reason? The latest example of the Maulvi of Murapara is too fresh in the public mind to need recounting. Are we to understand that under your rule there is one law for the Muslim and another law for the Hindu and that the D.I. Rules have a different meaning when a Muslim is involved? If so, the Government might as well make a pronouncement to that effect.

Lest it be argued or suggested for one moment that for my incarceration, the Government of India and not the Local Government are responsible, I may remind you that in connection with an adjournment motion concerning myself, tabled by Pandit L. K. Maitra before the Indian Legislative Assembly only the other day, it was stated on behalf of the Government of India that the matter should not come before the Central Assembly, since I had been incarcerated by the Bengal Government. I believe a similar admission was made in the Bengal Legislative Assembly on behalf of the Ministry.

And we cannot forget that here in Bengal we live under the benign protection of a "popular" ministry.

My recent election to the Indian Legislative Assembly has raised another issue—that of "immunity" from imprisonment for members of the Legislature, while the Legislature is in session. This is a right inherent in every constitution, no matter whether it is explicitly provided in the statute or not and this right has been established after a protracted struggle. Quite recently, the Burma Government allowed a convicted prisoner to attend the sittings of the Burma Legislative Assembly, but though I am not a convicted prisoner, I have been denied that right by our "popular" ministry.

If apologists attempt to invoke the precedent of Captain Ramsay, M.P., in support of the Government, I may point out that Capt. Ramsay's case stands on a different footing altogether. Serious charges have been preferred against him, but all the facts not being known to us, it is difficult to argue either way. One may, however, urge that if Capt. Ramsay has been unjustly imprisoned and no redress will be ultimately forthcoming, it would lend substance to what Mr. Kennedy (American Ambassador to Great Britain) and others are reported to have said—namely, that democracy is dead in England. In any case, Capt. Ramsay has had the opportunity of getting his case examined by a Committee of the House of Commons.

In dealing with my case generally, two broad issues have now to be considered. Firstly, have the Defence of India Rules any

sanction—ethical or popular? Secondly, have the rules, as they stand, been properly applied in my case? The answers to both the questions are in the negative.

The D.I. Rules have no ethical sanction behind them because they constitute an infringement of the elementary rights and liberties of the people. Moreover, they are essentially a war-measure and, as is known to everybody, India was declared a belligerent power and was dragged into the war, without the consent of the Indian people or the Indian Legislature. Further, these Rules militate against the claim so vociferously made in Britain that she is fighting the cause of freedom and democracy. And lastly, the Congress Party in the Central Assembly was not a party to the adoption of the Defence of India Act or the Defence of India Rules. In these circumstances, it would not be improper to ask whether the Defence of India Rules should not more appropriately be called the Suppression of India Rules or the Defence of Injustice Rules.

It may be urged on behalf of this Government that the Defence of India Act being an Act of the Central Legislature, all provincial Governments are obliged to administer the Rules framed thereunder. But enough has already been said above to justify the charge that the Rules, even as they stand, have not been properly applied in my case. There has been manifest illegality and injustice. Only one explanation can, to my mind, account for such a strange conduct, viz., that Government have been pursuing a frankly vindictive policy towards me for reasons that are quite inexplicable.

For more than two months, the question has been knocking at the door of my conscience over and over again as to what I should do in such a predicament. Should I submit to the pressure of circumstances and accept whatever comes my way—or should I protest against what to me is unfair, unjust and illegal? After the most mature deliberation I have come to the conclusion that surrender to circumstances is out of the question. It is a more heinous crime to submit to a wrong inflicted than to perpetrate that wrong. So, protest I must.

But all these days, protest has been going on and the ordinary methods of protest have all been exhausted. Agitation in the press and on the platform, representations to Government, demand in the Assembly, exploration of legal channels—have not all of these been already tried and found ineffective? Only one method remains—the last weapon in the hands of a prisoner, i.e. hungerstrike or fast.

In the cold light of logic I have examined the pros and cons of this step and have carefully weighed the loss and gain that will accrue from it. I have no illusions in the matter and I am fully conscious that the immediate, tangible gain will be nil, for I am sufficiently conversant with the behaviour of Governments and bureaucracies in such crises. The classic and immortal examples of Terence Macswiney and Jatin Das are floating before my mind's eye at the moment. A system has no heart that could be moved, though it has a false sense of prestige to which it always clings.

Life under existing conditions is intolerable for me. To purchase one's continued existence by compromising with illegality and injustice goes against my very grain. I would throw up life itself, rather than pay this price. Government are determined to hold me in prison by brute force. I say in reply: "Release me or shall I refuse to live—and it is for me to decide whether I choose to live or to die."

Though there may be no immediate, tangible gain—no suffering, no sacrifice is ever futile. It is through suffering and sacrifice alone that a cause can flourish and prosper and in every age and clime, the eternal law prevails—"the blood of the martyr is the seed of the church."

In this mortal world, everything perishes and will perish—but ideas, ideals and dreams do not. One individual may die for an idea but that idea will, after his death, incarnate itself in a thousand lives. That is how the wheels of evolution move on and the ideas, ideals and dreams of one generation are bequeathed to the next. No idea has ever fulfilled itself in this world except through an ordeal of suffering and sacrifice.

What greater solace can there be than the feeling that one has lived and died for a principle? What higher satisfaction can a man possess than the knowledge that his spirit will beget kindred spirits to carry on his unfinished task? What better reward can a soul desire than the certainty that his message will be wafted over hills and dales and over the broad plains to every corner of his land and across the seas to distant lands? What higher consummation can life attain than peaceful self-immolation at the altar of one's Cause?

Hence it is evident that nobody can lose through suffering and sacrifice. If he does lose anything of the earth earthy, he will gain much more in return by becoming the heir to a life immortal.

This is the technique of the soul. The individual must die, so that

the nation may live. Today I must die, so that India may live and may win freedom and glory.

To my countrymen I say, "Forget not that the greatest curse for a man is to remain a slave. Forget not that the grossest crime is to compromise with injustice and wrong. Remember the eternal law: You must give life, if you want to get it. And remember that the highest virtue is to battle against iniquity, no matter what the cost may be."

To the Government of the day I say, "Cry halt to your mad drive along the path of communalism and injustice. There is yet time to retrace your steps. Do not use a boomerang which will soon recoil on you. And do not make another Sindh of Bengal."

I have finished. My second and last request to you is that you should not interfere forcibly with my fast, but should permit me to approach my end peacefully. In the case of Terence Macswiney, of Jatin Das, of Mahatma Gandhi and in our own case in 1926 Government did decide not to interfere with the fast. I hope they will do the same this time—otherwise any attempt to feed me by force will be resisted with all my strength, though the consequences thereof may be even more drastic and disastrous than otherwise.

I shall commence my fast on the 29th November, 1940.

*Presidency Jail,*  
26.11.1940.

Yours faithfully,  
SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

*P.S.* As in my previous fasts, I shall take only water with salt. But I may discontinue this later on, if I feel called upon to do so.—  
S.C.B.

## V

To  
The Hon. Chief Minister  
and  
the Council of Ministers.

Dear Sirs,

This is my final appeal to you.

2. I have already written to Government requesting them not to

resort to forcible feeding and informing them that if this is nevertheless attempted, I shall have to resist with all my strength, though the consequences thereof may be "more drastic and disastrous than otherwise." In my confidential letter to the Superintendent, Presidency Jail, dated the 30th October and in my letter to Government, dated the 26th November, I made my position perfectly clear. I was therefore, surprised when I got hints from the Jail authorities that forcible feeding was still being contemplated in my case.

3. I shall not repeat all the arguments urged by me on this subject in the above two letters, but I desire to briefly recapitulate my position once again.

4. Firstly, Government have no moral right to feed me forcibly when they are responsible for making my life intolerable through injustice and illegality, strongly tinged with communalism.

5. Government have no legal authority either, to forcibly feed me in these circumstances. There is no law that I know of which empowers Government to use force in this matter. A departmental order of Government cannot take the place of law, particularly when it infringes the elementary rights and liberties of the individual.

6. If any attempt is made to forcibly feed me in spite of my repeated requests to the contrary, all those directly or indirectly responsible for it—will become civilly and criminally liable for any injury or pain, bodily or mental, that may be inflicted on me thereby.

7. Apart from the above points of principle, my physical condition, both before and after the commencement of fast, should render it impossible for forcible feeding to be attempted in my case. It should be quite clear that under such circumstances, forcible feeding will defeat its own purpose and instead of prolonging life, will hasten its end. Civil and criminal liability for the use of force will, owing to this consideration, be naturally aggravated.

8. I may inform you in this connection that in the event of forcible feeding being resorted to, I shall have no option but to take steps to relieve myself of the unbearable, protracted agony resulting from it. This could be done only by suicide and the responsibility for it will rest entirely with the Government. For a man who has turned his back on life, there are a hundred ways of reaching his end and no power on earth can prevent his death. I have chosen the most peaceful method and it would be sheer brutality to force me to adopt a less peaceful or more drastic remedy. The step that I have now taken is not an ordinary fast. It is the result of several months'

mature deliberation, finally sealed by a vow prayerfully taken by me on the sacred day of Kāli Pujāh.

9. I have been on hunger-strike several times before, but this fast is of an unusual type, never resorted to by me previously.

10. Man does not live by bread alone. He needs moral and spiritual sustenance as well. When he is denied the latter, you cannot expect him to live—merely to further your plans or fit in with your scheme of things.

11. I have already said in my letter of the 26th November, that I have but two requests to make of you—firstly, that my letter of the 26th November, which is my political testament, be carefully preserved in the archives of the Government and secondly, that I be allowed to approach my end peacefully. Is that asking too much of you?

*Presidency Jail,*  
2/5.12.40.

Yours faithfully,  
SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

## *My Conscience is My Own*

Report of an interview, December 9, 1940.

While convalescing after his release from detention following a hungerstrike, Netaji was asked to comment on a telegram received by a friend from Mahatma Gandhi on the question of withdrawal of disciplinary measures against the Bose brothers in order to effect unity in Bengal Congress ranks. Gandhiji's telegram was in the following terms:

*Wardhaganj, 28/11/40.*

REGRET INABILITY EVEN UNWILLINGNESS TO INTERFERE NOTWITHSTANDING  
MY REGARD AND FRIENDSHIP FOR THE BROTHERS. FEEL BANS CANNOT BE  
LIFTED WITHOUT THEIR APOLOGISING FOR INDISCIPLINE.

Netaji's comment was as follows: "I learnt the lesson from my political 'Guru,' Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, who is now no more, that personal relations should, as far as humanly possible, be kept above political differences. I have therefore been able to cherish deep personal regard and love for Mahatma Gandhi, despite all that I have suffered and am suffering at the hands of Gandhiites.

"At school I once read a poem on William Tell, the greatest hero of Switzerland—

My knee shall bend, he calmly said,  
To God and God alone,  
My life is in the Austrians' hands,  
My conscience is my own.

"I am not aware of any wrong that I have committed in my political career. Consequently, my reply to the Mahatma will be on the above lines with a few verbal changes."

## *On the Bengal Congress Tangle*

Between the 10th and 24th December, 1940, Netaji issued a number of public statements on Bengal Congress affairs. A fresh crisis had just then been created in the Congress legislative front by disciplinary action announced against Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, Leader of the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party, by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad acting in the name of the All-India Parliamentary Sub-committee of the Congress. The statements have been combined and some of the details of the dispute excluded to produce the following presentation reflecting Netaji's point of view.

During the last few days, I have had little peace of mind owing to a number of thoughts continually surging up within me. I believe that by unburdening myself of these thoughts, I shall have more peace of mind than at present and this will be conducive to my progress and recovery. I have, therefore, craved the indulgence of my doctors for issuing a few statements at leisure. Some of these statements are already with me in the form of incomplete letters written while I was in jail.

I shall first deal with the issue which is now convulsing Congress circles in Bengal, viz., the ukase of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad regarding S. J. Sarat Chandra Bose. It passes my comprehension how such a step could be taken by the Maulana when the country is passing through a crisis of this magnitude and the Congress leaders themselves have been making repeated appeals for unity. I need hardly say that we on our part desire national unity from the bottom of our hearts and we are fully prepared for an honourable solution of all outstanding differences and problems. But we cannot accept the position which some Congress leaders have taken up, namely, that no offer of honourable compromise can be made to the friends and colleagues on the Left. Consequently, if any attempt is made to insult or humiliate or discredit us in the public eye, we shall be in the painful necessity of not only resisting such an attack, but of counter-attacking, wherever we find it possible to do so. The fact that we are preoccupied with larger issues should not induce the Maulana and his friends to think that we shall ignore the attack from the Right on our "home-front."

The attack on S. J. Sarat Chandra Bose is but another phase of the



attack on the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee which has been going on since July, 1939. Consequently, the B.P.C.C. cannot but be vitally concerned in this question. When a division has been forcibly created by the Maulana within the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party, the B.P.C.C. would like to know who with for it and who are against it. It does not matter whether we shall have a majority within that Party or not. Majority or minority, our friends and supporters in the Bengal Legislature will continue to function under the name and style of the Congress Parliamentary Party. The *Ad Hocite*<sup>1</sup> members of the Legislature cannot claim to be the Congress Parliamentary Party, since they do not owe allegiance to the only valid Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.

It goes without saying that those who do not stand by the B.P.C.C. in this hour will forfeit all claim to renomination at the next general election. It does not require much intelligence to guess how many votes the Maulana's ticket will secure in general elections in Bengal and how many votes the B.P.C.C.'s ticket will.

And let me declare here and now that if the Congress High Command persist in their present policy, there will be parallel elections not only in Bengal but throughout India at the next general election. The Rightists will not be permitted to ride into office over the shoulders of the Left-wingers as they did last time.

The ultimate court of appeal on every public issue is the public. Let me therefore suggest a solution of the present parliamentary tangle in Bengal. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has censured Sj. Sarat Chandra Bose and sought to expel him. Others have the fullest confidence in him. But what do the public of Bengal say? Let all the Congress members of the Assembly resign and seek re-election on this issue. It is no use fighting with smaller men, so let Mahatma Gandhi himself set up the Working Committee's candidates with his blessings and support. Against them, we shall set up the candidates on behalf of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. We shall then await the verdict of our electorate with the greatest confidence and composure. Will the Mahatma agree?

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For carrying out the Party's mandate, the Maulana has sought to expel the Leader from the Party and from the Assembly. The

<sup>1</sup> An Ad Hoc Committee was set up in Bengal by the Congress High Command after the revolt of the majority of the elected Congress Committee against its policies.

Maulana's decision was arrived at in great secrecy behind the back of the Parliamentary Party and nearly six months after the incident had taken place.

This attack is in reality an onslaught on the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and on its legislative front. Who does not know that we have a strong out-post in the Bengal Legislature? This out-post the Maulana has endeavoured to demolish and destroy, but he has failed.

I shall in this connection give the Maulana one piece of advice. He has completely set at naught the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and the Parliamentary Party by issuing such a fiat over their head. But he has neither the position nor the following in this province which might have made it possible for the people to tolerate his authoritarianism. In future let him not therefore forget himself when he plays the Dictator's role.

... I think I have been able to prove that Maulana's charges against S. Sarat Chandra Bose have no legs to stand on. Maulana too is not altogether oblivious of the weakness of his position. That is why in private and in public he has to fall back on his one stock argument, viz., breach of discipline. Now, let us examine the real implication of discipline.

Discipline in an autocratic organisation means obeying the orders of one's superior officer or officers. In a democratic organisation, it means abiding by the will of the majority. The Maulana and Congressmen of his way of thinking demand that since they are in a majority in the All-India Congress Committee, the Leftist minority should implicitly obey the majority's will and on their failing to do so, they should be punished. The same principle of rule by majority should naturally be applied to the Provincial Congress Committees as well, but it is not done. Here in Bengal the Rightist minority want to defy the Leftist majority with impunity and when they do so, they are always supported by the Rightist High Command. Now, one cannot have it both ways. You cannot have a rule by majority in the All-India Congress Committee and a rule by minority in the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. Consequently, the argument of "discipline at any cost," which Maulana advances day in and day out—cannot hold water.

It may be urged that the High Command being the supreme Executive of the Congress, all Congressmen and Congress organisations should loyally obey its dictates. But this type of discipline is

possible only in an authoritarian organisation. As I have already said, in a democratic organisation, discipline can only mean "rule by the majority." It cannot possibly mean obedience to a superior officer under all circumstances.

In the present case, the Maulana completely ignored the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party and behind the back of the Party, he would penalise the Leader for giving effect to a resolution of the Party, viz., that the Leader should issue the whip for the indirect election to the Upper House.

If it be argued that the principle of rule by majority should apply to the All-India Congress Committee alone and all other Congress organisations have no independent existence of their own and should blindly obey the mandate of the High Command, which is the Working Committee of the All-India Congress Committee—then I should like to refer to the Congress Constitution. That Constitution clearly states in Article II that local organisations like the Provincial Congress Committees are as integral parts of the Congress as the All-India Congress Committee and do not owe their origin to the latter. The principle that should guide the All-India Congress Committee should therefore guide the Provincial Congress Committees.

Moreover, authoritarianism on the part of a dictator or a group may be tolerated if either of them has the necessary following and position in a particular area. In the case of Bengal, neither the Maulana nor even Mahatma Gandhi should be unaware of the real position.

In the last analysis, if the Congress is a national organisation as we all claim, the justification for that claim will depend on the degree of public confidence it can command. Since the Ad Hoc Committee does not command public confidence in Bengal, no fiat from Ballygunge Circular Road or from Wardha can infuse life into it and convert it into a Provincial Congress Committee. On the other hand, no ukase from either place can kill the valid Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. That is why even after the so-called suspension, we have continued to function under the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and shall continue to do so in future.

It follows from this that only those members of the Bengal Legislature who owe allegiance to the valid Provincial Congress Committee will be entitled to work and function under the name of the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party. If the adherents of the

Ad Hoc Committee so desire they may form an *Ad Hoc* Party in the Legislature, but they cannot usurp the name of the Congress Parliamentary Party.

Along with the argument of discipline, another allied argument which is often trotted out is that the members of the Assembly accepted a certain pledge at the time of the General Election and they should remain true to it. This argument is too superficial to stand analysis.

Times, circumstances, conditions, etc., have completely changed since that pledge was taken. That Working Committee which commanded the confidence of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and which, in its turn, respected the latter—no longer exists. To-day the Working Committee no longer commands the confidence of the majority of Bengal Congressmen. It certainly does not command the confidence of the B.P.C.C. and in its turn, it does not respect the latter. The old pledge has therefore automatically become null and void. Give us the old Working Committee and the old conditions and circumstances—and you will find that the old pledge will in that case stand—otherwise not.

I know that it will be argued that in every organisation and administration there is such a thing as “continuity of policy.” But “continuity of policy” is not possible when a revolutionary change takes place.

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The B.P.C.C. is not the only organisation which has suffered at the hands of the High Command. Other Provincial Congress Committees like those of Delhi, Kerala, etc., have also suffered. But these organisations cannot be killed by waving the magic wand of the Congress Dictators. These organisations do not owe their birth to the High Command and the latter cannot therefore annihilate them by a stroke of the pen. So long as the public have confidence in these organisations, they will continue to function as Congress Committees. There can be no question of going out of the Congress, because we are Congressmen and our organisations are Congress organisations. If in future we have to fight the High Command in the elections throughout the country as we have fought in the extra-parliamentary sphere, we shall do so in the name of the Congress and not by going out of the Congress. The Congress is ours, as much as it is anybody else's.

I am told that the Maulana has told people that he is more than a Bengali. If so, let him follow the traditions of Bengal and follow in the footsteps of our great leader, Deshbandhu C. R. Das. Let him give up his policy of vendetta and through toleration and love unite the people of this province. It was through toleration and love that the Deshbandhu was able to convert foes into friends and present a united Bengal. No other gospel will appeal to this province.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and his satellites tried to save themselves from an overwhelming defeat by an eleventh-hour postponement of the meeting of the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party. But if the Maulana had any knowledge of constitutional procedure, he should have realised that neither he nor the General Secretary of the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party had power or authority to cancel the meeting of the Party after it had been duly convened.

Not being content with acting in an arbitrary and high-handed manner by ordering the cancellation of the above meeting, the Maulana has now come out with a whip to chastise those who did not feel cowed down before his imperial and impudent ukase. The Maulana has always claimed to be more than a Bengali. But he is entirely ignorant of the manners, courtesy and hospitality prevalent in this corner of the world. When the members of the Parliamentary Party assembled at this house at the instance and on the invitation of the General Secretary, the Maulana did not have the elementary courtesy to welcome them or to offer them seats. In fact, he did not even show his face as long as they were in his house.

It is high time that the great Maulana realised that it was no use trying to play the role of the Grand Moghul. In endeavouring to do so, he is only making himself ridiculous. With the scanty following and influence that he has in Bengal, he cannot drive a steam-roller over the heart of this Province.

I am sure that the members of the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party will treat his latest threat with the contempt it deserves. I would advise the Maulana to cease his efforts at creating further dissensions in this Province and turn his energy and attention to the larger issues that are now agitating the people of India.

One word more before I close. I would like to tell the Maulana that even under the Constitution and resolutions of the Congress, the All-India Parliamentary Sub-Committee is not as all-powerful as he thinks it is. The All-India Parliamentary Sub-committee has to work in co-operation with the Provincial Congress Committees

and so far as Bengal is concerned, who does not know which is the valid Provincial Congress Committee? Once again I may remind the Maulana that the Provincial Congress Committee in Bengal will run the Provincial elections whenever they take place and we shall then see how its offspring, the Ad Hoc Committee, fares at the polls.

The Grand Moghul of the Congress is fast becoming a comic figure. He is suffering from the delusion that from his room in Ballygunge Circular Road he can rule Bengal by hurling his disciplinary thunderbolts from time to time. It is of no concern to him that what he is doing is *ultra vires* of the Congress Constitution itself. And it is of no consequence to him that through his penal measures he may soon be expelling the entire public from the Congress.

He reminds me of the last Moghul Emperors who, because they were still surrounded with regal pomp and splendour, were entirely oblivious of the fact that the ground had slipped off their feet and that the empire had already passed out of their hands. I wonder who can restore sense to our modern Alanascar.

The Working Committee handed over all its powers to Mahatma Gandhi and most of its members walked into prison. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has, therefore, no power left in his hands, but he persists in thinking like the great French Emperor—"I am the State." If today any single individual has authority to speak in the name of the Congress, it is Mahatma Gandhi and not Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

Even when the Working Committee was functioning, neither the President nor the All-India Parliamentary Sub-Committee had power to take disciplinary action. Whenever disciplinary action had to be taken, the Working Committee had always to meet and decide.

If the Maulana has any doubt on this point, I would request him to refer to the terms of the resolution of the Working Committee appointing the Parliamentary Sub-Committee.

The Maulana's stock-in-trade is his argument regarding pledge and discipline. It never strikes him that because of a revolutionary crisis within the Congress since that pledge was given, that argument cannot hold water. The Working Committee does not command public confidence. In the case of Bengal, the Working Committee has forfeited the confidence of the valid Provincial Congress Committee. Consequently, the pledge has automatically become null

and void. Restore the Working Committee of 1936-1937 with conditions prevailing then, and the pledge will still hold good. The argument that the present Working Committee is the heir of the Committee of 1936-1937 is also futile because when a revolutionary crisis occurs, old loyalties and pledges invariably snap.

The Maulana perhaps thinks that his word is law, no matter what the Congress Constitution or Constitutional Law may say. That is why in his ignorance of law and procedure, he mustered sufficient impudence to order the cancellation of the annual meeting of the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party which had been duly convened by its General Secretary. And that is why he exhibited similar impudence when he ordered the Punjab Congress Parliamentary Party to elect a particular individual as Leader.

Unfortunately for the Maulana that Party elected Sardar Sampuran Singh as Leader, despite his mandate, but ever since Sardarji's election as Leader, the Maulana has been after him. The Grand Moghul has now ordered the expulsion of Sardar Sampuran Singh from the Congress Party and it remains to be seen whether that Party will sacrifice its Leader or stand by him as it has done in Bengal.

Whatever happens, there is no doubt that by forcing out of the Congress Master Tara Singh and Sardar Sampuran Singh, the outstanding leaders of the Sikh community, the Congress High Command is virtually threatening to drive the Sikhs out of the Congress. One can only hope that the Sikhs will not meekly submit to this authoritarianism, because the Congress is a national institution and not the property of any individual or group.

The way our Grand Moghul has been bungling everywhere should cause concern to every right-thinking man. In the recent case of Sardar Sampuran Singh, the matter should have been dealt with by Mahatma Gandhi as the Congress Dictator, but the Maulana could not refrain from butting in.

It is now evident that he has been messing up things in Sind also. When the Congress Coalition Ministry was formed in Assam, despite the Maulana's violent opposition, he predicted that it would crash in no time. But true to my prediction, that Ministry stood like a rock against all onslaughts. The Maulana had his revenge when the War broke out and he then handed over that province to the political opponents of the Congress party there.

In the case of Sind, when the then Premier, Khan Bahadur Allah

Bux, was dying for a Coalition with the other parties, including the Congress Party, and I as Congress President strongly pleaded for it, the Maulana set his face against it. The result was steady deterioration culminating in a chaotic state of affairs in Sind.

After a long stay in Sind only the other day, the Maulana promised us a stable Ministry and communal concord there, but it now appears that all his arrangements are going to be torpedoed.

In conclusion, I would appeal to the Maulana once again to refrain from playing the Dictator's role in local and provincial affairs. In Bengal he has had numerous rebuffs in municipal, provincial assembly, provincial council and Central Assembly elections and it is high time he realised what little influence or popularity he has in this province. He would be doing a great service to the country if he gave up his present suicidal policy and concentrated on the larger issues which are now agitating the whole country.



## A Letter to Lord Linlithgow

38/2, Elgin Road,  
Calcutta,  
29th December, 1940

Your Excellency,

After considerable hesitation, I have decided to address Your Excellency on the situation in Bengal, though I am still confined to bed. The matter is one of extreme urgency and does not brook delay. Moreover, Your Excellency is, fortunately, now in Bengal and it should be easy to study the situation on the spot and verify at once the accuracy of what I am going to say. The opportunity is a rare one and in the public interest I should not miss it. That is my excuse for encroaching on Your Excellency's time and attention.

2. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, despite the scheme of provincial autonomy, the Governor General-in-Council has certain responsibilities in the provincial sphere as well. But this constitutional provision would not, by itself, afford a sufficient *raison d'être* for expecting Your Excellency to look into a provincial affair. The War has, however, brought about constitutional changes in India in the direction of centralisation and the Government of India have assumed direct responsibility for the administration of the whole of British India.

3. I shall now come straight to the issue which I desire to place before Your Excellency. Since April, 1937, Bengal has been ruled by a Ministry which is predominantly communal in outlook and purpose. Behind this rule, stands an alliance—perhaps an unwritten alliance—between some Muslim M.L.A.s on the one side and the British Government and the British mercantile community on the other. On communal questions, the Muslims are given a free hand, while on political issues the will of the Governor and the British mercantile community is allowed to prevail. Those who belong to neither side have had no place in the administrative picture of Bengal since 1937. But their exclusion would not have been of much consequence if the administration had been carried on with reasonable

efficiency, purity and impartiality. But such is unfortunately not the case. Rank communalism seems to be the basic principle of the administration, the other features of which are inefficiency and corruption.

4. I should hasten to remark at this stage that in criticising the Bengal Ministry in the above manner, I have nothing in common with the mental attitude of the Hindu Mahasabha. People like myself are prepared to concede to the Muslims, gladly and voluntarily, their legitimate share in everything which interests them. We have already proved our bonafides in this matter by our action in the past—action which at times has made us unpopular with that section of the Hindus which is communally-minded. Today we represent perhaps the only party in India that can still hope to bridge the gulf between the two major communities and can still claim to possess the goodwill of a large section of Indian Muslims.

5. Nobody will deny that Bengal has been the cradle of Indian Nationalism since the dawn of British rule in this country. Hindu Bengal, in particular, has throughout these decades thought and striven in terms of nationalism, with the result that the Hindu Mahasabha movement has never had a strong foothold here. But to-day a wave of communalism is spreading over Hindu Bengal, as an inevitable reaction to Muslim Communalism. In the face of this communal vortex with its unending eddies, those who believe in Nationalism are looking on helplessly.

6. One may say that it is of no direct concern to the British Government, or to the British mercantile community or to the Muslims in general that the Hindus of Bengal have been suffering since 1937 or that communalism has been gaining ground among them or that administration is characterised by communalism, inefficiency and corruption. But this is only superficially true. My proposition is that though to-day the Hindus of Bengal may find themselves in trouble and jeopardy—the situation is developing in such a manner that very soon it will affect all the other communities as well. To use different language, the Muslim Ministry in Bengal has been using a boomerang which will before long recoil on all the other communities. And when the Sindh crisis is reproduced in Bengal, the situation will be beyond repair.

7. I desire to draw Your Excellency's attention to the serious potentialities of the situation in Bengal, not because the Hindus have been having a bad time, but because the peace of the whole province may be upset in future if an immediate remedy is not found and applied.

8. One of the possible remedies and perhaps the best remedy under the existing circumstances is to have a Government that will command the confidence of both the major communities and will work for the welfare of the province as a whole. An administration based on justice, purity and efficiency would be the ideal solution. At present though we have Ministers who call themselves Hindus, they have no following worth the name, with the result that the Hindu community as a whole has no confidence in the present Government. In the case of Scheduled castes, the majority of their representatives in the Bengal Legislative Assembly sit on the opposition benches, and the two scheduled caste Ministers have not been able to break the scheduled caste opposition in the Assembly, though they are in a position to distribute patronage liberally. So far as the Muslims are concerned, it would be only fair to say that an influential section among them is strongly dissatisfied with the present reactionary administration. As a proof thereof, the Krishak-Proja Party, with a following that is not negligible, has been consistently siding with the Opposition.

9. Your Excellency has a great responsibility in the matter—both direct and indirect. The direct responsibility emanates from constitutional sources. The indirect responsibility springs from the fact that the present ministry depends entirely on the support of the Governor and the British mercantile community for its existence.

10. If Your Excellency is satisfied with the situation in Bengal, whatever the reasons may be, I have nothing further to add and this letter may be ignored altogether. But we know it for a fact that the situation is pregnant with serious possibilities and both the British Government and the British mercantile community should, in their own interests, look into the matter. In the case of the Holwell Monument Satyagraha, the non-official British community took up a far-sighted attitude, which was greatly appreciated. And it is just possible that that community may not be found wanting in political sagacity today.

11. Another remedy which strikes me is the suspension of the Constitution during the period of the war. But that is a remedy about which I would rather not say anything now, since another solution is available.

12. If the British Government and the British mercantile community continue to play the role that they have been playing in the public life of Bengal since 1937, the situation will steadily deteriorate

until it reaches a stage which will be beyond repair. If that development unfortunately takes place, we shall at least have the satisfaction of having brought the matter to the notice of the highest governmental authority in the land in good time.

I am,  
Yours faithfully,  
SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE



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country. I do not propose to attempt an analysis of the personality and programme of Mahatma Gandhi which enabled him to attract the masses towards the Congress in an unprecedented manner. The process which Mahatma Gandhi set on foot has now to be brought to fruition. How can this be done? There are so many false and extraneous issues which tend to mislead the dumb millions, to create differences and dissensions and to emphasise fissiparous tendencies. Our weapon against them is a two-fold one—political and socio-economic. On the political side we must stress the nationalist appeal as against the lure of narrow communalism.

We must all learn to think and feel in terms of the nation and not in terms of a group or sect. On the socio-economic side, we must open the eyes of our illiterate countrymen to the fact that despite differences of religion, caste or language, our economic problems and grievances are the same and can be solved only when we are free and have a national Government, truly representative of the will of the people.

It is absolutely necessary to stress the economic issues which cut across communal divisions and barriers. The problems of poverty and unemployment, of illiteracy and disease, of taxation and indebtedness affect alike the Hindus and Muslims and other sections of the people and it should be easy to explain to our masses that their solution depends on the prior solution of the political problem, i.e., on the establishment of a national, popular and democratic Government.

Scientific mass propaganda on the above lines, if persisted in, is sure to bring the people of all religions and castes under the banner of Swaraj. When the masses come to the Congress in their thousands and lacs, the influence and strength of the Congress will increase proportionately. The only problems that will then remain will be to organise and discipline this vast membership and prepare them for the suffering and sacrifice which the future struggle for Swaraj will involve.

There is, however, a relevant question to which I should like to refer here. The new members that will come into the Congress as a result of scientific propaganda should not be like dumb-driven cattle. They should be live human beings, with plenty of initiative. If the individual members lack initiative, the Committees which they will form will also lack dynamism. In that event, democracy may prove to be a failure. The success of democracy in India

depends on the initiative of the individual and on the dynamism of the subordinate Congress Committees. If the initiative has to come from the top and not from the bottom, democracy may be well-nigh reduced to totalitarianism. But that is not what we are working for. Let us, therefore, remember that individual initiative has to be unceasingly encouraged and developed and subordinate Congress Committees have to be maintained in a state of eternal vigilance and activity.

Our needs and our duties at the present time are simple indeed. But to fulfil them requires herculean efforts. There is no time to lose; let us, therefore, put our shoulders to the wheel at once.



# *The European Crisis—Analysis of the Debacle*

Full text of a signed article in *The Congress Socialist*, October, 1938.

The recent European crisis has been studied and explained by different people from different points of view. Herein the reader will find another such study.

On the 19th January, 1938, I passed through Prague and had the honour of being received by Dr. Benes, the then President of the Czechoslovak Republic. I had had the privilege of meeting him twice before, when he was the Foreign Minister under President Masaryk. President Benes during the course of a one-hour talk told me that never before had Czechoslovakia felt so safe and secure as then. By common consent, Dr. Benes is one of the cleverest statesmen in Europe but even he did not realise that he was sitting on a volcano. Verily, the cleverest of us can sometimes err grievously. The Czech Maginot Line and the newly developed air-force had lulled the President into a sense of security.

The next day I passed through Vienna. Everything was quiet there, as in Austria generally. Schuschnigg seemed to be safely installed as Chancellor and backed by the black-robed clergy and the black-shirted Fascists was ruling Austria without any difficulty. Little did he know that within a few months, the Nazis were going to march into Austria and he was to be made a prisoner, like so many of the Austrian Socialists whom he had imprisoned.

The Nazis had previously torn up the Treaty of Versailles and marched into the Rhineland to occupy it militarily. The French secret service had reported to the French Government that Hitler's instructions to the Reichswehr (German Army) were that if the French Army invaded Germany, the Reichswehr were to fall back and avoid a war. Blum had not the guts to call Hitler's bluff.

Austria's independence had been guaranteed by the big powers but when the Nazis invaded Austria and occupied it, nobody had the courage to lodge a protest even. In July, 1934, Italy had threatened

invasion if the Germans entered Austria when Dolfuss was murdered, but in 1938, Italy was completely changed.

Small wonder then that in a few months, not content with grabbing Austria, Germany wanted to annex the Sudetenland. Once again Hitler thought that nobody would venture to call his bluff.

What made Hitler contemplate a fresh invasion? He was assured that Italy would not object to it and the big powers would not venture to fight him. Their armament programme was not ready, particularly that of England. Now or never was, therefore, Hitler's motto.

It is urged that Hitler was on the point of invading Czechoslovakia when Chamberlain rushed to meet him in an aeroplane. Was this projected invasion a make-believe or a reality? If you ask me, I shall say that Germany would never have ventured into a war, knowing that Great Britain would be arrayed against her. Therefore, in my opinion, British politicians were either befooled by Hitler or they deliberately lent a helping hand to German hegemony over the continent. British surrender to Hitler meant the virtual substitution of the Anglo-German Alliance in place of an Anglo-French Alliance. The pro-French group in the Cabinet was overthrown by the pro-German group in the Cabinet.

But why did France surrender to blackmail? That is a question I find it difficult to answer. Since the Great War, there was French hegemony on the continent. That hegemony has disappeared overnight and France is now a second class European power. I did not think that French Imperialists would go down without a fight. And the French Socialists? Why did they agree to toe the line? I am inclined to think that they have been suffering from an inferiority complex. That is why they could not stand up to Hitler. Blum was much too frightened at the prospect of war to be able to do the right thing.

But France could have saved Czechoslovakia and at the same time prevented war. If the French had firmly told Britain and Germany that she would stand by Czechoslovakia, then Russia would have come in. And since the frontiers of Great Britain are now the Rhine, she would have never deserted France. I am told by a friend who is just back from Europe that in Belgium all arrangements for a war were complete. Thus the history of 1914 would have repeated itself. I know sufficiently of Nazi Germany to be able to say that the Nazis would have quailed before a situation similar to that of 1914.

It is my considered opinion that a word from Britain to Germany to the effect that she would stand by France and Czechoslovakia would have sufficed to make Hitler give up all his plans for attacking Czechoslovakia.

In the face of French and British betrayal, what could Czechoslovakia have done? I have a feeling that had she withstood a German invasion, she might have dragged in France and Russia into the arena and ultimately Great Britain also. But this is after all a speculation. Dr. Benes had before his eyes the fate of Abyssinia. Perhaps he thought that it would have been better for the Negus as a practical politician to have accepted the proposals of the Hoare-Laval Pact. That is why he surrendered Sudetenland to Germany and kept what remained of his country after appeasing the Poles and the Hungarians.

What we have just witnessed is the first scene of a drama which will possibly end with a Four-Power Pact, the victory of France and the elimination of Soviet Russia from European politics. These, at any rate, are the plans of Fascist politicians all over Europe. Will they succeed? Who can tell?

One thing seems to be clear. If Soviet Russia wants to stage a come-back, she will first have to convince the Big Powers that her war-machine is as formidable as it was at the time the Franco-Soviet Pact was first broached by Laval.

## On Kemal Ataturk

Tribute to the Leader of Turkey on his death, November, 1938.

*Of the romantic figures thrown up by the Great War, Kemal Pasha was undoubtedly one of the most striking. His meteoric rise to fame and popularity is indeed rare in history. Kemal Pasha was, however, much more than a romantic figure or a conquering hero. He was at the same time a shrewd strategist and an acute diplomat and his unprecedented success in life would hardly have been possible without a unique combination of manifold qualities of head and heart. Kemal Pasha was revolutionary not merely on the battlefields of Anatolia, but also in the field of national reconstruction.*

He was a magnificent example of the dictum that those who strive for liberty and win it should also put into effect the programme of post-war reconstruction. Great as a general, great as a diplomat, great as a social reformer, great as a statesman, great as a fighter and great as a builder—Kemal Pasha, or Kemal Ataturk, is undoubtedly one of the greatest men of this century. To him goes the credit of saving his country from the jaws of the European Powers and of building up a rejuvenated Turkey on the ashes of the erstwhile Ottoman Empire. Should the European Powers try once again to overrun Asia, Kemal's Turkey will guard the western flank of our continent. The death of such a unique personality cannot but move the whole world and particularly all oppressed and exploited nations like ours.

It is our bounden duty to pay our respectful homage to this great lover of freedom and of humanity. I, therefore, suggest that we observe "Kemal Day" on the 19th November next and utilise the occasion for holding meetings at which resolutions should be passed paying our respectful homage to the memory of Kemal Ataturk and conveying our friendly greetings to the emancipated people of his beloved Turkey and our heart-felt sympathy for them in their national bereavement.

# *The National Planning Committee*

Inauguration speech at the first meeting of the All-India National Planning Committee at Bombay on December 17, 1938.

In the beginning of his speech Shri Subhas Chandra Bose, the Congress President, outlined the industrial possibilities of the country and emphasised the need for the Committee to see that in whatever suggestions it made for the industrial regeneration of the country, the interests of the smaller village industries were strictly safeguarded. He said:

During the last few weeks, I have noticed an apprehension in certain quarters as to the possible effects of our efforts to industrial planning on the movement that has been going on since 1921 for the production of Khadi and the promotion of cottage industries under the auspices of the All-India Spinners Association and the All-India Village Industries Association respectively. It may be remembered that at Delhi I made it perfectly clear in my opening speech that there was no inherent conflict between cottage industries and large-scale industries. As a matter of fact, I divided industries into three classes: cottage, medium-scale and large-scale industries and I pleaded for a plan which would lay down the scope of each of these classes. Not only that. In the National Planning Commission we have reserved a seat for a representative of the All-India Village Industries Association and a similar seat could also be arranged for in the National Planning Committee. It would be doing us a grave injustice if it be urged or even apprehended that the promoters of the National Planning Commission want to sabotage the movement for the revival of cottage industries.

Everybody knows or should know that even in the most industrially advanced countries in Europe and Asia, e.g., Germany and Japan, there are plenty of cottage industries which are in flourishing condition. Why then should we have any apprehension with regard to our own country?

I may now add a few remarks on the relation between cottage

industries and large-scale industries. Among large-scale industries, mother industries are the most important, because they aim at producing the means of production. They put into the hands of artisans necessary appliances and tools for facilitating quicker and cheaper production. For example, if in the city of Benares we could supply electrically driven looms along with electrical power at the rate of half-anna per unit, it would be possible for the artisans working in their own homes to twin out sarees and embroidered cloth of different varieties at about five or six times the present rate of production and it would enable them to compete successfully with foreign imported goods of this description. With a good marketing organisation and an organisation for the supply of raw materials, these artisans can be rescued from the depths of poverty and misery to which they have fallen.

This is not the only instance which I can give. If the power industry and the machinery manufacturing industries are controlled by the state for the welfare of the nation, a large number of light industries like the manufacture of bicycles, fountain pens and toys can be started in this country by men of the artisan class working with the family as a unit. This is exactly what has been done in Japan. Success depends entirely upon the fact that power and machinery are extremely cheap and the Japanese Government have set up boards for the supply of raw materials and for proper marketing. I believe that this is the only way by means of which the handloom industry and the silk industry of our country can be revived.

The National Planning Committee will have to tackle specific problems. It will have first to direct its attention to the mother industries, i.e., those industries which make the other industries run successfully—such as the power industry, industries for the production of metals, heavy chemicals, machinery and tools, and communication industries like railway, telegraph, telephone and radio.

Our country is backward in respect of power supply compared with other industrially-advanced countries. In the matter of electrical power particularly India's backwardness can be gauged from the fact that while in India we have at present only seven units per head, a backward country like Mexico has ninety-six units per head and Japan about five hundred units per head. In developing electrical power, the Government has squandered money: take the instance of the Mandi Hydro-Electric Scheme on which the Government have spent ten times as much as other countries have done on similar

efforts. How I wish an enquiry could be made into the manufacture of machinery and machine tools with a view to keeping up supplies in the event of interruption of communications with foreign countries owing to war or any other causes. The other key industries into which an inquiry should be started are the fuel industry, the metal production and heavy chemical industries. In this respect the resources of the country have not been properly investigated and, whatever little industry there is, is being controlled by foreigners, with the result that there is a lot of wastage. This is particularly true of the fuel industry.

The last key industry is the transport and communications industry which includes railways, steamships, electrical communications, radio, etc. At present the railways are controlled by the Railway Board, which is entirely under European management and only a small fraction of the requirements of the railways is manufactured in the country. As regards steam navigation, excepting coastal traffic, the entire communication is in the hands of non-Indians owing to unfair privileges enjoyed by them. Electrical goods are entirely supplied by foreign countries. As regards radio, I would like to suggest the setting up of a special sub-committee to investigate its possibilities.

Lastly, we will have to consider the most important problem of finding the necessary capital and credit for our plan of industrialisation. Unless this problem is solved, all our plans will remain mere paper schemes and we shall not make any headway in our industrial progress.

## Part II

1939





## *A Minimum Clear-Cut Programme*

Text of statement issued from Bombay on January 17, 1939.

I have nothing special to add to what I have been saying during the last few months. Today when I analyse the situation in the country, I find that on the Right there is a drift towards constitutionalism while on the Left there is a drift towards irresponsibility and indiscretion.

The acceptance of office has undoubtedly enhanced the strength and prestige of the Congress, but simultaneously it has helped to accentuate the weaker elements in the national character. I find that today there are many people who are thinking and dreaming of progress towards our goal of Purna Swaraj without any further fight.

Other people are now coming into the Congress who have their own axes to grind or who consider the Congress to be a safe organisation. This is what largely accounts for the tendency towards enlisting bogus members which one finds in several Provinces.

On the Left I find that there are far too many groups who have their petty differences and dissensions. The Left elements in the Congress have during the last few months lost ground instead of gaining it. Individuals have, on certain occasions, been behaving in such a way as to enable their critics to say that they are consciously or unconsciously promoting violence.

I am definitely of opinion that the present opportunity of pushing on towards the goal of Purna Swaraj should not be lost, for such an opportunity is rare in the lifetime of a nation. To that end the Left should co-operate with the Right, so long as it is possible for them to do so. But what co-operation can they offer when they are so disorganised and indisciplined? Those who believe in Leftism would do well to consider what steps they could take to organise and discipline all radical elements in the Congress on the basis of a clear-cut programme. When they are so organised and disciplined, they will be able to offer real co-operation to the Right in the task of winning Purna Swaraj.

The first thing that we need is that all Congressmen should speak

with one voice and think with one will. I regret that of late there has been a tendency on the part of certain individual Congressmen to whittle down the Congress resolution of uncompromising hostility to Federation. I desire to make it perfectly clear that no Congressman has any authority to do so. I hope that such an attempt will not be made in future. I also hope that nobody will be misled by the un-called-for advice given to the British Government by such irresponsible individuals.

I should like to add that if the Federal Scheme is forcibly introduced, a fight will have to be waged on all fronts and if such a fight does begin, I am sure it will not be confined to the people of British India. We have, however, reached a stage when the main problem is not how we shall fight Federation, but what we should do if the Federal Scheme is quietly dropped over us or its promulgation postponed sine die. That there is every possibility of Federal Scheme being quietly shelved is not only my personal opinion but it is also the view hinted at the other day by Lord Meston. To this question the Tripuri Congress will, I hope, give a proper reply. My own view on this point is perfectly clear and I have already given expression to it. All those who honestly believe that Swaraj will not be won without a fight, should consider it their sacred duty to prepare in everyway for the coming developments in accordance with the fundamental principles of the Congress. This will mean preparation for greater service and sacrifice, self-purification, sinking of all petty differences and organisation of all the anti-Imperialist elements in the Congress on the basis of a minimum clear-cut programme. Such organisation will materially help to stem the tide towards constitutionalism on the one hand and irresponsibility and indecision on the other.

# *The Tripuri Presidential Election Debate*

FIRST STATEMENT OF SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

*January 21, 1939.*

In view of the situation created by the withdrawal of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and after reading the statement that he has issued, it is imperative for me to say something on the subject of the impending Presidential election. In discussing this question all sense of false modesty will have to be put aside for the issue is not a personal one. The progressive sharpening of the anti-imperialist struggle in India has given birth to new ideas, ideologies, problems and programmes. People are consequently veering round to the opinion that as in other free countries the Presidential election in India should be fought on the basis of definite problems and programmes so that the contest may help the clarification of issues and give a clear indication of the working of the public mind. An election contest in these circumstances may not be an undesirable thing.

Up-till now I have not received any suggestion or advice from a single delegate asking me to withdraw from the contest. On the contrary I have been nominated as a candidate from several Provinces without my knowledge or consent and I have been receiving pressing requests from Socialists as well as non-Socialists in different parts of the country urging me not to retire. Over and above this there seems to be a general feeling that I should be allowed to serve in office for another term. It is possible that this impression of mine is not correct and that my election is not desired by the majority of delegates. But this could be verified only when voting takes place on the 29th January and not earlier.

As a worker my position is perfectly clear. It is not for me to say in what capacity I should serve. That is a matter to be decided by my countrymen and in this particular case by my fellow-delegates. But I have no right to decline to serve if and when I am ordered to a particular place. As a matter of fact, I shall be failing in my duty if I shirk any responsibility which may be cast on me. In view of the